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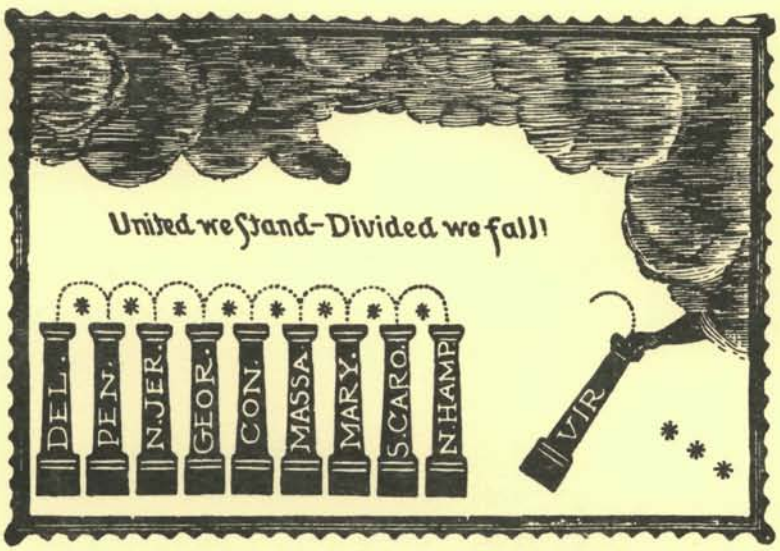

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1981 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa.

POSTMASTER: Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders, and other mail to Editorial and Circulation Offices, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Subscription rates: $4.00 a copy, $12.00 one year, $30.00 three years, foreign and Canadian $3.00 a year additional for postage.

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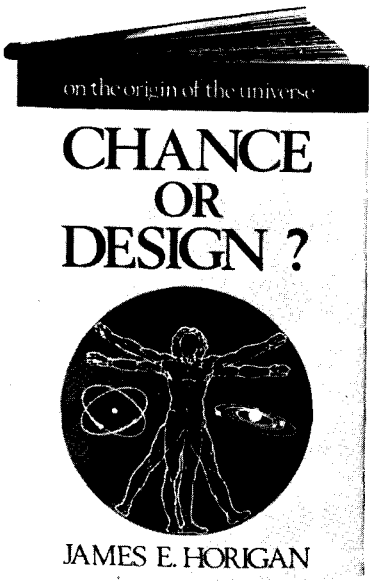

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Out of My Mind

Portrait of Bleibermacher

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

Maurice Bleibermacher has beaten the system. He has become known in academic circles as an "eclectic." This means that he can now obtain grants from foundations without actually having a field. Every member of each fellowship committee, although quite sure that Bleibermacher is not in *his* field, is equally sure that Bleibermacher must be in someone else's field. The net result is that they simply give him a grant, reasoning that since he had one last year *that* committee must have decided that Bleibermacher had a field. Bleibermacher explained his secret to me. Each year he prepares a general purpose lecture with an extremely interesting title—a title that seems to cover simultaneously as many scholarly disciplines as possible.

Last year's lecture, for example, which I had the misfortune to hear, was called "Freud, Quantum Mechanics and the Collective Unconscious—Where?" The final "Where?" was a Bleibermacherian masterstroke. The main point of the lecture, as I recall, was to demonstrate that the photon was conscious. Some of the physicists in the audience tried to snare Bleibermacher in a discussion of Bell's theorem, but before they had much of a chance he managed to change the topic to the influence of the Upanishads on Franciscus de Marchia's notion of the *virtus derelicta*. After the lecture I told Bleibermacher, whom I have known since we were graduate students together, that his views on the photon gave fresh meaning to the phrase "seeing is believing." "Your problem, George," he responded, "is that you have no sense of humor." This was not entirely fair. I do have a sense of humor. As a matter of fact, when at a faculty meeting at my university it was suggested that Bleibermacher be invited to this year's convocation address, I actually laughed out loud. "If a loaf of Wonder Bread could lecture," I commented, "it would sound like Bleibermacher." Needless to say, he was invited anyway, even though it meant paying his expenses from Big Sur, where he has now established himself and where he is trying to teach a dolphin to do the crossword puzzle in the Sunday San Francisco *Chronicle*.

Even when we were graduate students it was not clear what Bleibermacher's field was. He was always comparing things. He had a great fondness for terms such as "La Dolce Style Nuovo" or "Poisson brackets" or "logical empiricism," and since he liked each of the terms individually, he assumed that they should have some significant connection. The fact that each of the names belonged to concepts in disciplines that had absolutely nothing to do with each other never unduly troubled Bleibermacher. I once asked Bleibermacher if he actually understood what a Poisson bracket was. "Your problem, George," he replied, "is that you try to understand things *before* you see how they are connected."

About this time Bleibermacher married an unfortunate mousy girl named Janice who supported them by working as a secretary in the physics department. She and Bleibermacher had gone to high school together somewhere in Ohio. Later, after the divorce, Bleibermacher gave his birthplace, when asked, as Bucharest. He had also acquired an odd foreign accent that no one could quite place. He had that studied speech defect of many British intellectuals who say "wobot" and "wealism." On top of this he put v's and w's into words when you least expected them,

JEREMY BERNSTEIN is a professor of physics at the Stevens Institute of Technology and a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. His latest book is *Science Observed*.

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as in, "That's not wery wealistic of you, George." After listening to Bleibermacher for awhile, I always found that my lips began to pucker involuntarily.

After graduate school—Bleibermacher's degree was conferred jointly by at least three departments—he grew a goatee and gained fifteen pounds. All of this, it appears, enhanced his sexual appeal. Indeed, several otherwise lucid women of my acquaintance claimed that Bleibermacher gave off a mysterious sexual energy—he was, apparently, a sort of sexual quasar. From time to time, I would encounter him at meetings of the Modern Language Association or the American Philosophical Society with one or another incandescent young blond whom Bleibermacher would introduce as his secretary. They all looked to me as if they had just come ashore on Windandsea Beach at La Jolla—you could almost smell the salt water. They hung on Bleibermacher's every word. So I was not overly surprised when I received the following letter:

Dear George,

As you probably know, I shall be coming to you for convocation. [Posters with Bleibermacher's picture were already hanging all over the campus.] Perhaps you can give me some advice. [Now what?] I cannot quite decide whether to present my ideas on cosmology or entropy. [In translation: whether to give this year's lecture or last year's. Bleibermacher must have worried that a number of people besides myself had already heard last year's lecture.] I am, of course [the judicious use of "of course" was another of Bleibermacher's fine touches], struck by the congruences between Snorri Sturelson's account of the origins of the universe in the *Younger Edda* and the *Popol Vuh* of the Quiché Maya. Have you ever noticed the striking similarities between the Unkempt and Black Sorcerer and Niffiheim and Muspelheim? Is this yet another example of continental drift? Was Iceland ever part of Guatemala or vice versa? Were Einstein and Lemaître aware of the parallels? Can one regard Einstein's cosmological constant as another realization of the giant Ymir?

On the other hand, I have recently come to the conclusion that the second law of thermodynamics has been overemphasized in the California high school system. I made a survey of the freshman class at Stanford and discovered, to my distress, that 60 percent of them had recurrent dreams about the impending heat death of the universe. Does this mean that we are teaching young people about entropy before they have acquired sufficient emotional maturity to put it into its proper perspective? After all, the increase in entropy is a perfectly natural function. It should be accepted joyfully. In any case, it is not worth losing a night's sleep over. And besides, as Poincaré has taught us, if we only wait long enough, the cracked egg will spontaneously reassemble. It is just a matter of time.

On a more personal note. [Here it comes.] President and Mrs. Praeger have been good enough to invite me to stay in their home during convocation. It seems that this is a tradition. I find, therefore, that I will have to book a room somewhere not too far from the campus for my secretary, Seleina Marlow, who has kindly agreed to accompany me. Can you suggest a motel?

I value your views,
Maurice

I sent Bleibermacher a postcard with the telephone number of the local Holiday Inn.

I managed to be away from the university during the next few weeks while the final preparations for Bleibermacher's visit were being made. When I got back, Alice Dodd, my colleague in the philosophy department, told me that Praeger had come around to the department to look for me—which came as something of a surprise since, as far as I could tell, Praeger never seemed to know in which department I was actually teaching. It seems he had found out that Bleibermacher and I had gone to graduate school together and wanted my help in clearing up a dilemma. The library had wanted to organize a little display of Bleibermacher's books but had not been able to find any of them. Praeger thought that I might have some first editions. "Poor Praeger," Alice Dodd reported, "seemed rather bewildered when I told him that Bleibermacher had never written a book."

"You should have told him," I pointed out, "to get some of the video tapes of Bleibermacher's numerous appearances on the *Today* show." There was one, I recalled, in which Bleibermacher was in some sort of tank with a dolphin that he had borrowed from the San Diego Zoo. He was trying, he said, to communicate with the animal, but the dolphin, wisely, spent most of the interview underwater. Periodically, Bleibermacher would put his head underwater and wave a small fish at the dolphin, which ignored him.

Praeger had decided that representatives of the faculty—two from each department—should meet Bleibermacher at the airport.

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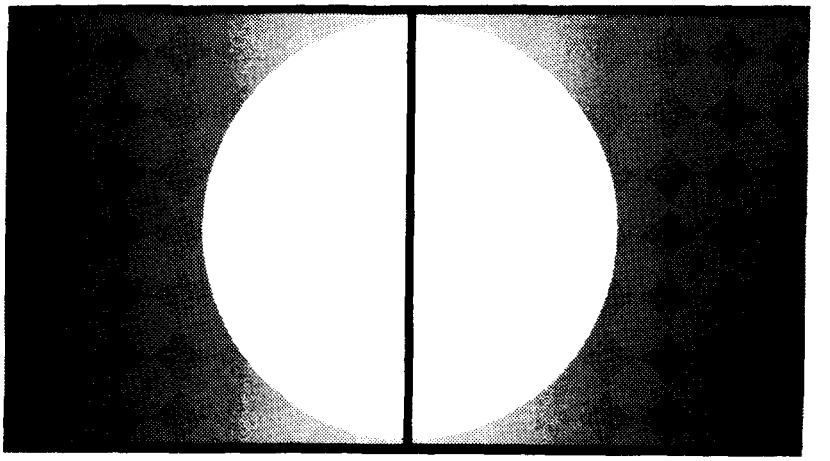

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Herbert Feist, the chairman of the philosophy department, with whom I have a relationship built, as they say in military circles, on mutually assured destruction, sent me a crisp memo on his "From the desk of the chairman" paper suggesting that he and I constitute the representation from our department. He had chosen me, no doubt with reluctance, because of my long friendship—if that is what it is—with Bleibermacher. I told Feist that as much as I would like to go to the airport, I had an appointment to tutor some graduate students who wanted to learn more about Mill's views on induction. "They want to know," I told Feist, "how many white swans we have to see before we can say with reasonable certainty there is no such thing as a blue swan. I feel that they are entitled to an answer." As soon as I saw Feist leave in his car for the airport, I went home and poured myself a stiff drink.

Later that evening the phone rang. My heart sank. I thought it might be Bleibermacher or possibly Praeger or Feist. I was pretty confident that it wasn't a student since I kept my phone number unlisted in order to avoid those callers. Reluctantly I answered the phone. Fortunately, it was Alice Dodd. Although she and Feist are barely on speaking terms—they had had a brief and stormy affair—she had been in her office where Feist had caught her and had insisted that, for the good of the department (everyone else had evaporated), she come to the airport. She was phoning to give a report as to what took place. Bleibermacher got off the plane with an incredible looking blond in tow—Seleina Marlow. Praeger was thoroughly bewildered since, as he put it, he "had not been informed that there was a Mrs. Bleibermacher." The guest room the Praegers had prepared had, it appears, only a single bed. The provenance of Seleina Marlow was explained to Praeger. There then was a general exodus back to the campus in various cars.

Somehow Feist managed to capture Bleibermacher, Seleina Marlow, and Alice Dodd in his car, so Alice Dodd was able to observe what ensued. "Feist was determined to score points with Bleibermacher," Alice Dodd reported. He probably wanted an invitation to Bleibermacher's place in California, but Bleibermacher, with all his faults, was hardly about to spend his hard-earned foundation money on the likes of Feist. "He," Alice Dodd went on, referring to Feist, "started a violent argument with Bleibermacher as to whether neutrinos have a death wish." It was unlikely that either Feist or Bleibermacher had the foggiest idea of what a neutrino is. "Bleibermacher," Alice Dodd went on, "was all over Feist. It was like the slaughter of the innocents. He managed to bring in quotations ranging from the Demotic Mathematical Papyri to Huang Ting's *T'ien-wen ta-ch'eng kuan-k'uei chi-yao*. Feist looked as if he were about to have a hemorrhage. He was reduced to muttering 'I should have thought' over and over. Just when I thought they might actually come to blows, which would have been interesting, the Seleina Marlow person piped up and asked where the Holiday Inn was. When we got there, she and Bleibermacher got out, and he announced that he would get to the Praegers' later by taxi. Feist dropped me off without even saying goodbye." So much for Feist's chance to go to Big Sur.

I have been giving careful consideration to the following mini-max problem, as they say in the theory of games: How can I minimize my actual contacts with Bleibermacher while at the same time maximizing the number of times Praeger sees me in Bleibermacher's general vicinity? Feist has been moving heaven and earth to see that Praeger does not give me a raise next year, but if Praeger gets the message that Bleibermacher and I move in comparable orbits, it might help matters. It is crucial to this strategy that Bleibermacher and I don't start on each other in front of Praeger. A simple exchange of banalities will suffice. The major test of this strategy will be at the Praegers' reception for Bleibermacher this evening. To calm my nerves I read, as I often do in circumstances like this, the anatomical sections of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. I have just finished a fine paragraph on ganglia when I realize that I am already late for the Praegers'.

When I arrive at Praeger's home, I discover that to get to the drinks it is necessary to go through a receiving line that consists not only of Praeger and Bleibermacher (Seleina Marlow is nowhere to be seen—perhaps she is back at the Holiday Inn typing) but also Lenora Praeger. Lenora Praeger looks like one of those figures one makes by pressing fresh dough with a cookie cutter and then putting in

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raisins for the eyes. In her case kumquats would have been better. She is the organist in the college chapel. She has persuaded Praeger that it would be a lovely idea if the faculty would attend services to set an example for the undergraduates. At every faculty meeting Praeger makes an appeal for chapel attendance, which is only heeded by a few somewhat dotty professors emeriti who have nothing better to do and the junior faculty en masse in the hope that this will improve their chances for tenure. Naturally the undergraduates leave the college to go into New York for the weekend, which is what the rest of us would do if we could afford it.

There are a few people in front of me in line, so I have a chance to study Bleibermacher. He is wearing a very expensive three-piece suit with a matching silk handkerchief and tie. I think it is the same outfit he wore when he was being interviewed by Dick Cavett. He is, as usual, elegantly tanned and, also as usual, wearing tinted aviator's glasses. The goatee is still there, but something seems oddly out of place. For a few minutes I can't quite place it. Then it strikes me. Bleibermacher has had a hair transplant. What used to be sparse grayish tufts on the top of his skull have been replaced by youthful-looking sprouts of dyed black hair, which seem slightly out of place. The whole effect is like one of those geological inversions in which the younger Triassic rocks somehow land on top of the Jurassics leaving for the geologists the puzzle of explaining how they got there. In Bleibermacher's case we are witness to a miracle of modern dermatology.

When I get to Bleibermacher and Praeger, Praeger gives me a fishy look. Before he can say anything I say to Bleibermacher in as amiable a tone of voice as I can manage, "How is Trixie?" Praeger looks startled. Trixie is the name of the dolphin that Bleibermacher has borrowed from the zoo. "The work is getting vewy intense Gawge, vewy intense," Bleibermacher answers in his inimitable accent. I had read somewhere that the unfortunate animal was showing all the signs of an acute nervous breakdown and that the zoo was considering bringing suit against Bleibermacher. Despite my raise strategy, the temptation to ask Bleibermacher about this was all but overwhelming. But before I could say anything Bleibermacher went on, "I was telling Walter [a reference to Praeger] what a dedicated gwaduate student you were—always witing." That's it. The bastard has already done me in. Praeger must have mentioned the abortive monograph I have been writing for the last seven years on Rudolf Carnap. Its nonpublication has been one of the sore points between Praeger and me. There goes my raise. "I like the way you are doing your hair, Maurice," I answer. "One hardly notices the join." Praeger seems to have become aware that the conversation is getting out of hand and he says, rather urgently, "Try some of Lenora's punch, George. She spent the whole afternoon preparing it." "I may have to pass it up, Walter," I say. "As you know, I am allergic to berries." Praeger wheels Bleibermacher off and, as soon as I can, I make my way home. I drink a third of a bottle of cointreau and read myself to sleep with the *Encyclopædia Britannica* entry "Skin, Diseases of."

The next noon—Saturday, the day of the convocation address—I get up with a splitting headache and decide to go to the campus coffee shop for some black coffee. There, needless to say, is Bleibermacher. Sitting next to him and listening with rapt attention is Seleina Marlow. From where I am sitting it looks as if she is crocheting something that resembles a net. Also listening in rapt silence is a group of undergraduates. I find a table as far away from them as possible, but one of the students spots me and comes over to report that Bleibermacher is explaining how the Sanskrit treatise—the Khandakhādyaka of the Brahmagupta—proposes to calculate the manda of Saturn. "A very important concept," I comment, not having the remotest notion of what, if anything, the manda of Saturn is, "and well within your capacity to understand," I add. The student, looking a little puzzled, returns to Bleibermacher's explanations and I go home and read the *Encyclopædia Britannica*'s entry on "Joints" to pass the time before the convocation, which has been scheduled for the early evening.

I hoped that there might be a tornado that afternoon that would blow away the tent in which the convocation address is customarily given, possibly, even preferably, with Bleibermacher inside. But no such luck. It is a lovely evening, and the tent is full to capacity. A portable organ has been set up and Lenora

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Praeger, dressed in white, plays some approximation of Brahms's "Academic Festival Overture" to get things started. In fact she might have gone on indefinitely if Praeger had not succeeded in prying her away from the organ. A few awards are given out and some retirements are announced. My colleague, old Professor Lash, is retiring, and two of the junior faculty have to help him—he has spent the afternoon with a bottle of port in the faculty club—to the podium so he can receive his certificate. When he passes me on his way back to his seat, I can hear him muttering, "But they promised me a watch." Then there is Bleibermacher's speech. Praeger gives Bleibermacher a grotesquely long-winded introduction. The naive auditor might have gotten the impression that he was being nominated for a Nobel Prize.

Bleibermacher has decided to give this year's lecture—the one on entropy. He begins by taking a brightly colored sheet of paper, tearing it into shreds, and throwing the pieces at the audience. "This," he explains, "is an illustration of the increase in entropy. We have just experienced an actual increase in entropy." There is a stunned silence in the tent and then applause and cheering. Praeger is in such a state of rapture that for a moment I think he is about to cry. Next Bleibermacher mentions that recently it has come to his attention that Leonardo da Vinci invented radar. This is such a total non sequitur that I wonder for a moment if Bleibermacher has lost his mind. But I notice him rapidly shuffle his lecture manuscript like a blackjack dealer. He must have gotten a page from next year's lecture mixed in. No one else seems to have noticed. Indeed he makes a seamless transition back to entropy, the ostensible subject of his discourse. By this time I have settled into a kind of meditative stupor from which I am suddenly aroused by Bleibermacher's mention of Maxwell's demon. This is one of the few items I remember from the required physics course I took at college. In the nineteenth century James Clerk Maxwell invented a wonderful being—his demon—which, by filtering out the rapidly moving molecules in a gas, can make heat flow in the wrong direction—from cold to hot—thereby decreasing the entropy of the gas in apparent violation of the second law of thermodynamics. It caused a good deal of befuddlement to Maxwell's contemporaries, but Bleibermacher has, he says, no trouble grasping it, and he adds, practically shouting, it has given him a wonderful sense of liberation. "The second law of thermodynamics has lost its tyrannical grip over me," he shouts clutching his throat symbolically. Bleibermacher has, of course, gotten it wrong. He has forgotten to include the entropy change of the demon itself, which restores the second law. I look around to see if any of my colleagues in physics have noticed, but none of them has stayed for the lecture. My sole thought is, "Dear Lord, let there be a question period, and I will destroy the ganef!" Indeed, after a five-minute ovation, Praeger calls for questions. One undergraduate says that recently he had read in *Omni* magazine that on the back of one of Leonardo's recently discovered drawings, a perfectly executed sketch—in the master's hand—of a bowling alley had been discovered. Bleibermacher says that he is well aware of the discovery but that for reasons of time he had not mentioned it in his lecture. There are a few more questions, which Bleibermacher deals with readily. Then Praeger says, "There will be time for one more question." I raise my hand. Praeger looks around desperately for a question from someone else, anyone else. But no hands are raised, and indeed several undergraduates are pointing at me. Praeger is forced to call on me. I get to my feet and say, "Professor Bleibermacher, I found your comments on Maxwell's demon—within their limitations—exceptionally stimulating. But haven't you overlooked the change in entropy of the demon?" For the briefest of instants Bleibermacher looks genuinely bewildered. But then he takes a small metal triangle out of his pocket—he must keep it there for emergencies such as this. He holds it up to his microphone and strikes it with a metal rod which he has taken from another pocket. The tone reverberates in the tent. Then Bleibermacher says "Om" several times and sits down. There is total silence in the tent and then a wild burst of cheering and applause. Even Praeger is on his feet, cheering. The lecture is over and we all file out.

Six months have passed. I did not get my raise and Praeger has stopped speaking to me altogether. I have heard nothing from Bleibermacher, although I did see him on the *Today* show. Trixie has been returned to the San

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Diego Zoo and is, presumably, well on the road to recovery. Bleibermacher is now trying to teach a chimpanzee named Simba to construct small poems in iambic pentameter. I thought that I was well rid of Bleibermacher, but just this morning I received a short note from him:

Dear George,

Seeing you meant a great deal to me. In fact I want you to be the first to know that President Praeger has offered me the Herschel J. Lang Chair in Philosophy, and I have, after a great deal of thought, decided to accept. As of next fall we shall be colleagues—a wonderful prospect.

By the way—and I assume that this will be no trouble to you—could you look around near the campus for an attractive house I might buy? Do not worry about the price. The first consideration is comfort.

I value your views,
Maurice

The Master

FREDERICK MORGAN

When Han Kan was summoned
to the imperial capital
it was suggested he sit at the feet of
the illustrious senior court painter
to learn from him the refinements of the art.

"No, thank you," he replied,
"I shall apprentice myself to the stables."

And he installed himself and his brushes amid
the dung and the flies,
and studied the horses—their bodies' keen alertness—
eye-sparkle of one, another's sensitive stance,
the way a third moved graceful in his bulk—

and painted at last the emperor's favorite,
the charger named "Nightshining White,"

whose likeness after centuries still dazzles.

FREDERICK MORGAN is editor of the *Hudson Review*. His most recent books are *Death Mother and Other Poems* and *Poems of the Two Worlds*.

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What Is Vulgar?

ARISTIDES

What's vulgar? Some people might say that the contraction of the words *what* and *is* itself is vulgar. On the other hand, I remember being called a stuffed shirt by a reviewer of a book of mine because I used almost no contractions. I have forgotten the reviewer's name but I have remembered the criticism. Not being of that category of writers who never forget a compliment, I also remember being called a racist by another reviewer for observing that failure to insist on table manners in children was to risk dining with apaches. The larger criticisms I forget, but, oddly, these goofy little criticisms stick in the teeth like sesame seeds. Yet that last trope—is it, too, vulgar? Ought I really to be picking my teeth in public, even metaphorically?

What, to return to the question in uncontractioned form, is vulgar? Illustrations, obviously, are wanted. Consider a relative of mine, long deceased, my father's Uncle Jake and hence my granduncle. I don't wish to brag about bloodlines, but my Uncle Jake was a bootlegger during Prohibition who afterward went into the scrap-iron—that is to say, the junk—business. Think of the archetypal sensitive Jewish intellectual faces: of Spinoza, of Freud, of Einstein, of Oppenheimer. In my uncle's face you would not have found the least trace of any of them. He was completely bald, weighed in at around two hundred fifty pounds, and had a complexion of clear vermilion. I loved him, yet even as a child I knew there was about him something a bit—how shall I put it?—outsized, and I refer not merely to his personal tonnage. When he visited our home he generally greeted me by pressing a ten- or twenty-dollar bill into my hand—an amount of money quite impossible, of course, for a boy of nine or ten, when what was wanted was a quarter or fifty-cent piece. A widower, he would usually bring a lady-friend along; here his tastes ran to Hungarian women in their fifties with operatic bosoms. These women wore large diamond rings, possibly the same rings, which my uncle passed from woman to woman. A big spender and a high roller, my uncle was an immigrant version of the sport, a kind of Diamond Chaim Brodsky.

But to see Uncle Jake in action you had to see him at table. He drank whiskey with his meal, the bottle before him on the table along with another of seltzer water, both of which he supplied himself. He ate and drank like a character out of Rabelais. My mother served him his soup course, not in a regular bowl, but in a vessel more on the order of a tureen. He would eat hot soup and drink whiskey and sweat—my Uncle Jake did not, decidedly, do anything so delicate as perspire—and sometimes it seemed that the sweat rolled from his face right into his soup dish, so that, toward the end, he may well have been engaged in an act of liquid auto-cannibalism, consuming his own body fluids with a whiskey chaser.

He was crude, certainly, my Uncle Jake; he was coarse, of course; gross, it goes without saying; uncouth, beyond question. But was he vulgar? I don't think he was. For one thing, he was good-hearted, and it somehow seems wrong to call anyone vulgar who is good-hearted. But more to the point, I don't think that if you had accused him of being vulgar, he would have known what the devil you were talking about. To be vulgar requires at least a modicum of pretension, and this Uncle Jake sorely lacked. "Wulgar," he might have responded to the accusation that he was vulgar, "so vat's dis wulgar?"

To go from persons to things, and from lack of pretension to a mountain of it, let me tell you about a house I passed one night, in a neighborhood not far from my own, that so

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filled me with disbelief that I took a hard right turn at the next corner and drove round the block to make certain I had actually seen what I thought I had. I had, but it was no house—it was a bloody edifice!

The edifice in question totally fills its rather modest lot, leaving no backyard at all. It is constructed of a white stone, sanded and perhaps even painted, with so much gray-colored mortar that, even though it may be real, the stone looks fake. The roof is red. It has two chimneys, neither of which, I would wager, functions. My confidence here derives from the fact that nothing much else in the structure of the house seems to function. There is, for example, a balcony over a portico—a portico held up by columns—onto which the only possible mode of entry is by pole vault. There is, similarly, over the attached garage, a sun deck whose only access appears to be through a bathroom window. The house seems to have been built on the aesthetic formula of functionlessness follows formlessness.

But it is in its details that the true spirit of the house emerges. These details are not miniscule, and neither are they subtle. For starters, outside the house under the portico, there is a chandelier. There are also two torch-shaped lamps on either side of the front door, which is carved in a scallop pattern, giving it the effect of seeming the back door to a much larger house. Along the short walk leading up to this front door stand, on short pillars, two plaster of paris lions—gilded. On each pillar, in gold and black, appears the owner's name. A white chain fence, strung along poles whose tops are painted gold, spans the front of the property; it is the kind of fence that would be more appropriate around, say, the tomb of Lenin. At the curb are two large cars, sheets of plastic covering their grills; there is also a trailer; and, in the summer months, a boat sits in the short driveway leading up to the garage. The lawn disappoints by being not Astroturf but, alas, real grass. However, closer inspection reveals two animals, a skunk and a rabbit, both of plastic, in petrified play upon the lawn—a nice, you might say a finishing, touch. Sometimes, on long drives or when unable to sleep at night, I have pondered upon the possible decor of this extraordinary house's den and upon the ways of man which are various beyond imagining.

You want vulgar, I am inclined to exclaim, I'll show you vulgar: the house I have just described is vulgar, patently, palpably, pluperfectly. Forced to live in it for more than three hours, certain figures of refined sensibility—Edith Wharton or Harold Acton or Wallace Stevens—might have ended as suicides. Yet as I described that house, I noted two contradictory feelings in myself: how pleasant it is to point out someone else's vulgarity, and yet the fear that calling someone else vulgar may itself be slightly vulgar. After all, the family that lives in this house no doubt loves it; most probably they feel that they have a real showplace. Their house, I assume, gives them a large measure of happiness. Yet why does my calling their home vulgar also give me such a measure of happiness? I suppose it is because vulgarity can be so amusing—other people's vulgarity, that is.

Here I must insert that I have invariably thought that the people who have called me vulgar were themselves rather vulgar. So far as I know I have been called vulgar three times, once directly, once behind my back, and once by association. In each instance the charge was intellectual vulgarity: on one occasion a contributor to a collection of essays on contemporary writing that I once wrote about called me vulgar because I didn't find anything good to say about this book of some six hundred pages; once an old friend, an editor with whom I had had a falling out over politics, told another friend of mine that an article I had written seemed to him vulgar; and, finally, having patched things up with this friend and having begun to write for his magazine again, yet a third friend asked me why I allowed my writing to appear in that particular magazine, when it was so patently—you guessed her, Chester—vulgar.

None of these accusations stung in the least. In intellectual and academic life, vulgar is something one calls people with whom one disagrees. Like having one's ideas called reductionist, it is nothing to get worked up about—certainly nothing to take personally. What would wound me, though, is if word got back to me that someone had said that my manners at table were so vulgar that it sickened him to eat with me, or that my clothes were laughable, or that taste in general wasn't exactly my strong point. In a novel whose author or title I can no longer remember, I recall a female character who was described

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as having vulgar thumbs. I am not sure I have a clear picture of vulgar thumbs, but if it is all the same, I would just as soon not have them.

I prefer not to be thought vulgar in any wise. When not long ago a salesman offered to show me a winter coat that, as he put it, "has been very popular," I told him to stow it—if it has been popular, it is not for me. I comb my speech, as best I am able, of popular phrases: you will not hear an unfundamental "basically" or a flying "whatever" from these chaste lips. I do not utter "bottom line"; I do not mutter "trade-off." I am keen to cut myself out from the herd, at least when I can. In recent years this has not been difficult. Distinction has lain in plain speech, plain dress, clean cheeks. The simple has become rococo, the rococo simple. But now I see that television anchormen, hairdressers, and other leaders in our society have adopted this plainer look. This is discomfiting news. Vulgar is, after all, as vulgar does.

Which returns us yet again to the question: What is vulgar? *The Oxford English Dictionary*, which provides more than two pages on the word, is rather better at telling us what vulgar was than what it is. Its definitions run from "1. The common or usual language of a country; the vernacular. *Obs.*" to "13. Having a common and offensively mean character; coarsely commonplace; lacking in refinement or good taste; uncultured, ill-bred." Historically, the word vulgar was used in fairly neutral description up to the last quarter of the seventeenth century to mean and describe the common people. Vulgar was common but not yet contemned. I noted such a neutral usage as late as a William Hazlitt essay of 1818, "On the Ignorance of the Learned," in which Hazlitt writes: "The vulgar are in the right when they judge for themselves; they are wrong when they trust to their blind guides." Yet, according to the *OED*, in 1797 the *Monthly Magazine* remarked: "So the word *vulgar* now implies something base and groveling in actions."

From the early nineteenth century on, then, vulgar has been purely pejorative, a key term in the lexicon of insult and invective. Its currency as a term of abuse rose with the rise of the middle class; its spread was tied to the spread of capitalism and democracy. Until the rise of the middle class, until the spread of capitalism and democracy, people perhaps hadn't the occasion or the need to call one another vulgar. The rise of the middle class, the spread of capitalism and democracy, opened all sorts of social doors; social classes commingled as never before; plutocracy made possible almost daily strides from stratum to stratum. Still, some people had to be placed outside the pale, some doors had to be locked—and the cry of vulgarity, properly intoned, became a most effective Close Sesame.

Such seems to me roughly the social history of the word vulgar. But the history of vulgarity, the thing itself even before it had a name, is much longer. According to the French art historian Albert Dasnoy, aesthetic vulgarity taints Greek art of the fourth and third centuries B.C. "An exhibition of Roman portraits," Dasnoy writes, "shows that, between the Etruscan style of the earliest and the Byzantine style of the latest, vulgarity made its first full-blooded appearance in the academic realism of imperial Rome." Vulgarity, in Dasnoy's view, comes of the shock of philosophic rationalism, when humankind divests itself of belief in the sacred. "Vulgarity seems to be the price of man's liberation," he writes, "one might even say, of his evolution. It is unquestionably the price of the freeing of the individual personality." Certainly it is true that one would never think to call a savage vulgar; a respectable level of civilization has to have been reached to qualify for the dubious distinction of being called vulgar.

"You have surely noticed the curious fact," writes Valéry, "that a certain *word*, which is perfectly clear when you hear or use it in *everyday* speech, and which presents no difficulty when caught up in the rapidity of an ordinary sentence, becomes mysteriously cumbersome, offers a strange resistance, defeats all efforts at definition, the moment you withdraw it from circulation for separate study and try to find its meaning after taking away its temporary function." Vulgar presents special difficulties, though: while vulgarity has been often enough on display—may even be a part of the human soul that only the fortunate and the saintly are able to root out—every age has its own notion of what constitutes the vulgar. Riding a bicycle at Oxford in the 1890s, Max Beerbohm reports, "was the earmark of vulgarity." Working further backward, we find that Matthew Arnold frequently links

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the word *vulgar* with the word *hideous* and hopes that culture "saves the future, as one may hope, from being vulgarised, even if it cannot save the present." Hazlitt found vulgarity in false feeling among "the herd of pretenders to what they do not feel and to what is not natural to them, whether in high or low life."

Vulgarity, it begins to appear, is often in the eye of the beholder. What is more, it comes in so many forms. It is so complex and so multiple—so multiplex. There are vulgarities of taste, of manner, of mind, of spirit. There are whole vulgar ages—the Gilded Age in the United States, for one, at least to hear Mark Twain and Henry Adams tell it. (Is our own age another?) To compound the complication there is even likeable vulgarity. This is vulgarity of the kind that Cyril Connolly must have had in mind when he wrote, "Vulgarity is the garlic in the salad of life." In the realm of winning vulgarity are the novels of Balzac, the paintings of Frans Hals, some of the music of Tchaikovsky (excluding the cannon fire in the *1812* Overture, which is vulgarity of the unwinning kind).

Rightly used, profanity, normally deemed the epitome of vulgar manners, can be charming. I recently moved to a new apartment, and the person I dealt with at the moving company we employed, a woman whose voice had an almost strident matter-of-factness, instructed me to call back with an inventory of our furniture. When I did, our conversation, starting with my inventory of our living room, began:

"One couch."
"One couch."
"Two lamp tables, a coffee table, a small gateleg table."
"Four tables."
"Two wing chairs and an occasional chair."
"Three chairs."
"One box of bric-a-brac."
"One box of shit."

Heavy garlic of course is not to every taste; but then again some people do not much care for endive. I attended city schools, where garlic was never in short supply and where profanity, in proper hands, could be a useful craft turned up to the power of fine art. I have since met people so well-mannered, so icily, elegantly correct, that with a mere glance across the table or a word to a waiter they could put a chill on the wine and indeed on the entire evening. Some people have more, some less, in the way of polish, but polish doesn't necessarily cover vulgarity. As there can be diamonds in the rough, so can there be sludge in the smooth.

It would be helpful in drawing a definitional bead on the word vulgar if one could determine its antonym. But I am not sure that it has an antonym. Refined? I think not. Sophisticated? Not really. Elegant? Nope. Charming? Close, but I can think of charming vulgarians—M. Rabelais, please come forth and take a bow. Besides, charm is nearly as difficult to define as vulgarity. Perhaps the only safe thing to be said about charm is that if you think you have it, you can be fairly certain that you don't.

If vulgarity cannot be defined by its antonym, from the rear so to say, examples may be more to the point. I once heard a friend describe a woman thus: "Next to Sam Jensen's prose, she's the vulgarest thing in New York." From this description, I had a fairly firm sense of what the woman was like. Sam Jensen is a writer for one of the newsmagazines; each week on schedule he makes a fresh cultural discovery, writing as if every sentence will be his last, every little movie or play he reviews will change our lives—an exhibitionist with not a great deal to exhibit. Sam Jensen is a fictitious name—made up to protect the guilty—but here are a few sentences that he, not I, made up:

> The great Victorian William Morris combined a practical socialism with a love for the spirit of the King Arthur legends. What these films show is the paradox democracy has forgotten—that the dream of Camelot is the ultimate dream of freedom and order in a difficult but necessary balance.

> The screenplay by Michael Wilson and Richard Maibaum is not from an Ian Fleming novel; it's really a cookbook that throws Roger Moore as Bond into these action recipes like a cucumber tossed into an Osterizer. Osterization is becoming more and more necessary for Moore; he's beginning to look a bit puckered, as if he's been bottled in Bond.

From these sentences—with their false paradoxes, muffed metaphors, obvious puns, and general bloat—I think I can extrapolate the woman who, next to this prose, is the vulgarest thing in New York. I see teeth, I see

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hairdo, much jewelry, flamboyant dress, a woman requiring a great deal of attention, who sucks up most of the mental oxygen in any room she is in—a woman, in sum, vastly overdone.

Coming at things from a different angle, I imagine myself in session with a psychologist, playing the word association game. "Vulgar," he says, "quick, name ten items you associate with the word vulgar." "Okay," I say, "here goes:

1. Publicity
2. The Oscar awards
3. The Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies
4. Talk shows
5. Pulitzer Prizes
6. Barbara Walters
7. Interviews with writers
8. Lauren Bacall
9. Dialogue, as an ideal
10. Psychology."

This would not, I suspect, be everyone's list. Looking it over, I see that, of the ten items, several are linked with one another. But let me inquire into what made me choose the items I did.

Ladies first. Barbara Walters seems to me vulgar because for a great many years now she has been paid to ask all the vulgar questions, and she seems to do it with such cheerfulness, such competence, such amiable insincerity. "What did you think when you first heard your husband had been killed?" she will ask, just the right hush in her voice. "What went on in your mind when you learned that you had cancer, now for the third time?" The questions that people with imagination do not need to ask, the questions that people with good hearts know they have no right to ask, these questions and others Barbara Walters can be depended upon to ask. "Tell me, Holy Father, have you never regretted not having children of your own?"

Lauren Bacall has only recently graduated to vulgarity, or at least she has only in the past few years revealed herself vulgar. Hers is a double vulgarity: the vulgarity of false candor—the woman who, presumably, tells it straight—and the vulgarity provided by someone who has decided to cash in her chips. In her autobiography, Miss Bacall has supposedly told all her secrets; when interviewed on television—by, for example, Barbara Walters—the tack she takes is that of the ringwise babe over whose eyes no one, kiddo, is going to pull the cashmere. Yet turn the channel or page, and there is Miss Bacall in a commercial or advertisement doing her best to pull the cashmere over ours. Vulgar stuff. Give her, I say, the hook.

Talk shows are vulgar for the same reason that Pulitzer Prizes and the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies are vulgar. All three fail to live up to their pretensions, which are extravagant: talk shows to being serious, Pulitzer Prizes to rewarding true merit, the Aspen Institute to promoting "dialogue" (see item 9), "the bridging of cultures," "the interdisciplinary approach," and nearly every other phony shibboleth that has cropped up in American intellectual life over the past three decades.

Publicity is vulgar because those who seek it—and even those who are sought by it—tend almost without exception to be divested of their dignity. You have to sell yourself, the sales manuals used to advise, in order to sell your product. With publicity, though, one is selling only oneself, which is different. Which is a bit vulgar, really.

The Oscar awards ceremony is the single item on my list least in need of explanation, for it seems vulgar prima facie. It is the air of self-congratulation—of, a step beyond, self-adulation—that is so splendidly vulgar about the Oscar awards ceremony. Self-congratulation, even on good grounds, is best concealed; on no grounds whatever, it is embarrassing. But then, for vulgarity, there's no business like show business.

Unless it be literary business. The only thing worse than false modesty is no modesty at all, and no modesty at all is what interviews with writers generally bring out. "That most vulgar of all crowds the literary," wrote Keats presciently—that is, before the incontestable evidence came in with the advent and subsequent popularity of what is by now that staple of the book review and little magazine and talk show, the interview with the great author. What these interviews generally come down to is an invitation to writers to pontificate upon things for which it is either unseemly for them to speak (the quality of their own work) or upon which they are unfit to judge (the state of the cosmos). Roughly a decade ago I

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watched Isaac Bashevis Singer, when asked on a television talk show what he thought of the Vietnam War, answer, "I am a writer, and that doesn't mean I have to have an opinion on everything. I'd rather discuss literature." Still, how tempting it is, with an interviewer chirping away at your feet, handing you your own horn and your own drum, to blow it and beat it. As someone who has been interviewed a time or two, I can attest that never have I shifted spiritual gears so quickly from self-importance to self-loathing as during and after an interview. What I felt was, well, vulgar.

Psychology seems to me vulgar because it is too often overbearing in its confidence. Instead of saying, "I don't know," it readily says, "unresolved Oedipus complex" or "manic-depressive syndrome" or "identity crisis." As with other intellectual discoveries before (Marxism) and since (structuralism), psychology acts as if it is holding all the theoretical keys, but then in practice reveals that it doesn't even know where the doors are. As an old *Punch* cartoon once put it, "It's worse than wicked, my dear, it's vulgar."

Reviewing my list and attempting to account for the reasons why I have chosen the items on it, I feel I have a firmer sense of what I think vulgar. Exhibitionism, obviousness, pretentiousness, self-congratulation, self-importance, hypocrisy, overconfidence—these seem to me qualities at the heart of vulgarity in our day. It does, though, leave out common sense, a quality which, like clarity, one might have thought one could never have in overabundance. (On the philosophy table in my local bookstore, a book appeared with the title *Clarity Is Not Enough*; I could never pass it without thinking, "Ah, but it's a start.") Yet too great reliance on common sense can narrow the mind, make meager the imagination. Strict common sense abhors mystery, seldom allows for the attraction of tradition, is intolerant of questions that haven't any answers. The problem that common sense presents is knowing the limits of common sense. The too commonsensical man or woman grows angry at anything that falls outside his or her common sense, and this anger seems to me vulgar.

Vulgarity is not necessarily stupid but it is always insensitive. Its insensitivity invariably extends to itself: the vulgar person seldom knows that he is vulgar, as in the old joke about the young woman whose fiancé reports to her that his parents found her vulgar, and who, enraged, responds, "What's this vulgar crap?" Such obvious vulgarity can be comical, like a nouveau riche man bringing opera glasses to a porno film, or the Chicago politician who, while escorting the then ruling British monarch through City Hall, supposedly introduced him to the assembled aldermen by saying, "King, meet the boys." But such things are contretemps merely, not vulgarity of the insidious kind.

In our age vulgarity does not consist in failing to recognize the fish knife or to know the wine list but in the inability to make distinctions. Not long ago I heard a lecture by a Harvard philosophy professor on a Howard Hawks movie, and thought, as one high reference after another was made in connection with this low subject, "Oh, Santayana, 'tis better you are not alive to see this." A vulgar performance, clearly, yet few people in the audience of professors and graduate students seemed to notice.

A great many people did notice, however, when, in an act of singular moral vulgarity, a publisher, an editor, and a novelist recently sponsored a convicted murderer for parole, and the man, not long after being paroled, murdered again. The reason for these men speaking out on behalf of the convict's parole, they said, was his ability as a writer: his work appeared in the editor's journal; he was to have a book published by the publisher's firm; the novelist had encouraged him from the outset. Distinctions—crucial distinctions—were not made: first, that the man was not a very good writer, but a crudely Marxist one, filled with hatreds and half-truths; second, and more important, that, having killed before, he might kill again—might just be a pathological killer. Not to have made these distinctions is vulgarity at its most vile. But to adopt a distinction new to our day, the publisher, the editor, and the novelist took responsibility for what they had done—responsibility but no real blame.

Can an entire culture grow vulgar? Matthew Arnold feared such might happen in "the mechanical and material civilisation" of the England of his day. Vladimir Nabokov felt it already had happened in the Soviet Union, a country, as he described it, "of moral imbeciles, of smiling slaves and poker-faced bul-

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lies," without, as in the old days, "a Gogol, a Tolstoy, a Chekhov in quest of that simplicity of truth [who] easily distinguished the vulgar side of things as well as the trashy systems of pseudo-thought." Moral imbeciles, smiling slaves, poker-faced bullies—the curl of a sneer in those Nabokovian phrases is a sharp reminder of the force that the charge of "vulgar" can have as an insult—as well as a reminder of how deep and pervasive vulgarity can become.

But American vulgarity, if I may put it so, is rather more refined. It is also more piecemeal than pervasive, and more insidious. Creeping vulgarity is how I think of it, the way Taft Republicans used to think of creeping socialism. The insertion of a science fiction course in a major university curriculum, a television commercial by a once-serious actor for a cheap wine, an increased interest in gossip and trivia that is placed under the rubric Style in our most important newspapers: so the vulgar creeps along, while everywhere the third- and fourth-rate—in art, in literature, in intellectual life—is considered good enough, or at any rate highly interesting.

Yet being refined—or at least sophisticated—American vulgarity is vulnerable to the charge of being called vulgar. "As long as war is regarded as wicked," said Oscar Wilde, "it will always have its fascination. When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular." There may be something to this, if not for war then at least for designer jeans, French literary criticism, and other fashions. The one thing the vulgar of our day do not like to be called is vulgar. So crook your little finger, purse your lips, distend your nostrils slightly as you lift your nose in the air the better to look down it, and repeat after me: *Vulgar! Vulgar! Vulgar!* The word might save us all.

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Medicine in Politics

HUGH TREVOR-ROPER

MEDICAL DOCTORS PLAY A LARGE PART in personal history; it is therefore surprising that they make so slight an impact on public affairs, on politics. We can easily read a whole library of history without encountering the name of a single medical doctor, so modest and inconspicuous are the physicians of the body. How different are the physicians of the soul! From Aaron to the Ayatollah Khomeini they have, in Gibbon's phrase, "furnished the most important, though not always the most edifying, subjects for modern history." They have led revolutions, inspired invasions and massacres, overturned empires, enslaved peoples, distributed thrones. Priests have become kings, the rulers and deposers of kings. Although several medical doctors have developed political ambitions, I cannot think of one who has risen beyond the rank of a minor minister.

So one might argue, generalizing from our own experience in our comfortable liberal Western world. But once we look a little further afield, we soon discover that there is another world: that our own world, of which we are so confident, is perhaps not the norm but the exception, and that its conventions cannot always be taken for granted. The professional purity of medicine, its separation from politics, the observance of those golden rules passed down from Hippocrates to his modern successors, are not, we find, absolute; and in this essay I shall try to lift the discreet veil of professional camouflage and show that, at certain times and in certain political systems, doctors have, in fact, been highly political—although perhaps not always to the benefit of politics, society, morality, or religion.

I

My first discovery of the medical penumbra of political power, if I may so call it, came immediately after the Second World War, when I was ordered by my military superiors to find out what had happened to the Führer of Germany. For Adolf Hitler, the most terrible tyrant (as we

✪ HUGH TREVOR-ROPER, Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, is the author of many books, including *The Hermit of Peking* and *The Final Entries, 1945: The Diaries of Joseph Goebbels*.

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then thought) of modern times, the maker of World War II, the destroyer of Germany and the whole old order of Europe, after dominating the headlines of the world press for twelve years, had suddenly disappeared, without trace, in or from the ruins of Berlin; and after five months of complete silence, it had become important that his fate be discovered and made known. In the course of my inquiry, I learned several facts that surprised me. One of them was that in the politics of Hitler's court, at least in its last months, a disproportionate part was played by a group of medical doctors. Indeed, the personal and political differences that divided the rulers of Germany at that time—Hitler, Himmler, Bormann, Goebbels—seemed mild compared with the furious intrigues and desperate maneuvers of Drs. Conti and de Crinis, Brandt and von Hasselbach, Morell and Stumpfegger. Behind the major plot of the drama of Hitler's last weeks it was clear that there lay a minor plot, or subplot, a "play within a play": what I described at the time as "the great medical row." The investigation of this subplot led me to discover and to question some strange and some sinister medical men; and it was through them that I learned something about the unexpected, and generally undocumented, role of medicine in history.

Ostensibly, this great medical row was about the correct treatment of the ailing Führer, and the protagonists in it were Dr. Theodor Morell, Hitler's physician, and Dr. Karl Brandt, his surgeon. Dr. Morell was the senior and more important man. He had been with Hitler for many years and was now rich and fat, having used his position to acquire a very profitable monopoly of the pharmaceutical industry. When I interrogated him afterward, I found him, in his adversity, quite exceptionally unattractive; but perhaps, in his prosperity, he had been more dignified. Certainly Hitler trusted him implicitly. But was his trust justified? Dr. Brandt thought that it was not. In fact, Brandt convinced himself that Morell was slowly poisoning the Führer by the regular injection of dangerous drugs. Nor was Brandt alone in this view. It was shared by two other doctors, by Brandt's deputy, Dr. von Hasselbach, and by a specialist, Dr. Giesing. After grave professional confabulations, these three doctors finally ventured to express their view to Hitler himself.

The result was not quite what they had expected. After a period of ominous silence, the Führer came out of the clouds, like Jehovah on Sinai with thunder and lightning, and delivered his judgment. All three dissident doctors were suddenly expelled from the Führer's headquarters, and Dr. Morell reigned there supreme, continuing without opposition his suspect injections. Soon afterward, to fill the gap created by this purge, a new surgeon was summoned to court. His name was Ludwig Stumpfegger, and he came out of the medical stable of Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS. He had been recommended by Himmler's own

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Leibarzt, or personal physician, Dr. Karl Gebhardt. Stumpfegger took care not to quarrel with Dr. Morell. Consequently he remained with Hitler to the end, indeed—beyond even Morell—to the very end.

So far, we may say, so good: a purely professional dispute. Doctors are known to differ, and how is the layman to judge among them? Perhaps Morell's drugs were bad for Hitler, as Brandt thought; perhaps not. In my book, *The Last Days of Hitler*, I left the matter in suspense. However, Hitler's reaction seemed to me, even then, somewhat extreme, for Dr. Brandt was not merely dismissed from his post as Hitler's surgeon. Six months later the Führer issued a personal order for his arrest; he was haled before a summary court composed of Hilter's closest confidants; the court received a letter from Hitler demanding the extreme penalty; and Brandt was duly condemned to death. He was still in the death cell in Kiel, awaiting execution, when the British army took the city. He was afterward executed for different, and more real, crimes.

Why did Hitler react so strongly against his surgeon who, on the face of it, had merely wished to protect him from being poisoned by his physician? At first I was perplexed. I therefore consulted Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and closest friend. Speer, in those last months, had been Minister of Armaments, boss of all War Production, and the most powerful minister in Germany. Since he was well acquainted with all the personalities and intrigues of the court, he would surely (I thought) be able to explain the mystery. But to my surprise he too professed to be perplexed by the affair. The moving force in it, he said, was Martin Bormann, Hitler's secretary and Party Chancellor; but what moved Bormann, Speer could not tell. All that he could say was that "for some incomprehensible reason" (those are his words) Bormann was a bitter and determined enemy of Brandt. Walter Schellenberg, Himmler's chief of secret intelligence, also interested himself in the court doctors—as we shall see, he had a purpose in so doing. But in this matter he too professed incomprehension. The whole affair, he said, was part of "a huge game of intrigue," which he could not further unravel, except to say that Eva Braun and her sister were involved in it. Eva Braun's sister was married to Hermann Fegelein, a crony of Bormann. So once again the hand of Bormann can be sensed, pulling invisible strings behind an opaque, mysterious veil.

A few years after writing my book, a rent opened in that veil. I was then editing Martin Bormann's private correspondence with his wife, which had come into my hands. In his letters Bormann often mentioned Dr. Brandt, and always with detestation—detestation visibly mingled with alarm. "Just imagine!" he wrote on one occasion, "Brandt is trying to become Minister of National Health!" At long last we see him in his true colors. Dr. Goebbels is most alarmed. So are Dr. Ley and Dr. Frank,

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both excellent men. So, especially, is Dr. Morell. Dr. Morell has particularly good reasons, for Brandt (says Bormann) is trying to take over part of the chemical industry and so break Morell's profitable monopoly. Moreover, he is doing this "with the assistance of Comrade Speer." In short, Brandt "is behaving in a most repulsive manner"—"assisted, of course, by Speer, Saur and co!" (Saur was Speer's deputy.) Bormann naturally does not intend to take this lying down. He is (he explains to his wife) doing his best to ruin Brandt with the Führer; but alas, so far with very little success. "The Führer," he laments, after describing one such attempt, "thought differently: he spoke with high praise of Brandt—Speer's and Saur's paeans of praise had had the intended effect. . . . I said that in my eyes Brandt was an ambitious climber and intriguer with whom I would not like to sit down at the same table." But the Führer would not listen. "Just imagine," Bormann explodes, "how loathsome I find Brandt! . . . Never let yourself be taken in by Brandt! He is one of the cleverest cheats I know."

That was in August 1944. Two months later came the great medical row and the summary dismissal of Brandt and his supporters. Clearly Bormann's persistence had not been in vain: he had won the last round; and in reporting the new developments to his wife he could resume the calm, factual tone of the victor. "Yesterday," he wrote serenely, "Hasselbach was dropped as personal doctor to the Führer, and is to be replaced by Dr. Stumpfegger, who was Uncle H's attending physician up to now. The new man seems very pleasant. Brandt, too, is no longer to act as personal doctor. There have been new disputes between Morell on the one hand and Hasselbach and Brandt on the other; but now this state of affairs, so unpleasant for the Führer, no longer exists."

So the battle, once it is over, is reduced to a merely medical affair. But I think that, by now, we have seen its real character. It is part of a fierce struggle for power at a dictator's court. The protagonists were Bormann and Speer. These two men were very different. Bormann, "Hitler's Mephistopheles," the secretary who never left his side and succeeded in ruining all rivals to his own power, was a brutal, ruthless vulgarian, a bureaucrat whose influence over Hitler lay in his indispensability and constant presence. Speer was an urbane, educated "artist" whose influence, originally personal, was now reinforced by his control over the essential industries of war. The two men detested each other personally, and in the face of final defeat their policies were quite different. Bormann enjoyed the support of "Uncle H"—that is, Heinrich Himmler, who wielded the enormous force of the SS, the mechanism of the terror state. His aim was to preserve the bureaucratic structure of Nazi power. Speer had no such political support. He was a technocrat, and his aim was more longsighted: he wished, after the defeat of Nazism,

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to preserve the material basis of German life. It is in this context that we must see the role that the doctors were playing. In their struggle for power, Speer on one side, and Bormann and Himmler on the other, were using rival doctors to undermine each other's authority with Hitler. Brandt was Speer's man, Morell Bormann's. When Bormann won, and needed a trustworthy successor to Brandt, he turned naturally to his friend and ally, "Uncle H." Himmler thereupon consulted his doctor, Dr. Gebhardt, and Gebhardt produced Stumpfegger. Stumpfegger was Himmler's man, and Bormann soon made him his own. On May 1, 1945, Bormann and Stumpfegger left the Bunker together and died together, taking poison when they found it impossible to escape from Berlin.

Thus, as I read Bormann's letters, the scales fell from my eyes. I realized that the apparently medical controversies at Hitler's court were not really medical at all. They were an aspect of the fierce infighting of the politicians. So, when the historian of Nazi Germany comes across any court doctor, the first question he must ask is not what was his medical speciality or competence, but rather, how was he appointed, for whom is he working, whose man is he.

Twenty years after the war, Albert Speer himself came into the open. Emerging at last from Spandau prison, he published his memoirs. In them, he dropped his earlier pretense of incomprehension and spoke clearly. Expressing the lowest view of Morell and a remarkably high view of Brandt, he revealed that the sudden arrest of Brandt, who was "quite close to me," had been organized by Bormann as a blow against himself: "Bormann evidently thought . . . that Brandt was the chief mainstay of my influence with Hitler." So now—rather late in the day—the cat walks calmly out of an already open bag. Medicine, as we know it, is nowhere. We are in a rank feudal jungle, and the doctors—*corruptio optimi pessima*—are essential agents in this new bastard feudalism.

In the same memoirs, Speer also records an experience of his own, which sheds an even more sinister light on the medical profession at a tyrant's court. In January 1944, he tells us, he was taken ill and found himself in the hospital under the tender care of Dr. Gebhardt, whom we have met as Himmler's doctor, the man who produced Dr. Stumpfegger for the Führer. Dr. Gebhardt evidently did very little to cure Speer: in fact he did his best to keep Speer out of action as long as possible. Moreover, keeping Speer's own doctor in the dark, he took advice from Morell—who in the circumstances was unlikely to be disinterested. Under the treatment of Gebhardt and Morell, the agents of Himmler and Bormann, Speer's health declined sharply and "the doctors," he tells us, "prepared my wife for the worst." Luckily, Frau Speer contrived, by enlisting Brandt, to drive out the intruding doctors, whereupon the patient recovered rapidly. Afterward Speer heard that Gebhardt, at an SS

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drinking bout, had said that "in Himmler's opinion Speer was dangerous; he would have to disappear."

Dr. Gebhardt himself, whom I interrogated in 1946, was at least a man of some candor. He never made any bones about his own philosophy. In the Third Reich, he would say, it was not enough to be a good medical doctor: one had a duty also to be "a political doctor"—a notion unknown, I think, to Hippocrates. Conversely, if one were a politician in the Third Reich, it was important to know precisely how political one's doctor was and, in particular, whose man he was in politics. Otherwise one might receive "political treatment" in the form of a laxative or an injection. This, of course, was fully understood by all concerned at the highest level. It is the necessary commentary on a remark made by Walter Schellenberg in March 1945. Schellenberg was by then seeking to persuade Himmler that it was time for Hitler to disappear and for Himmler himself to take over complete power, and he argued that, if other means were not practical, "the doctors must be called in." "The doctors" would, of course, have included Uncle Heinrich's specialist, Dr. Gebhardt. He, no doubt, would have seen to it that Uncle Heinrich's instructions were carried out.

II

Dr. Gebhardt was not Himmler's only, or most important, doctor. While I was becoming familiar with the realities of medical life in the Third Reich, I discovered another more intimate and interesting character, who illustrates a second function of the doctor at a tyrant's court. For such a doctor is not only an agent, he can also be a manipulator. He can fill, for a godless dictator, the role that has been played in the past for Christian kings by their priestly confessors. This role was played at the court of the terrible Reichsführer by *Medicinalrat* Felix Kersten.

Kersten, whom I came to know personally, was an extraordinary character. A Baltic German by origin, with Finnish citizenship, he studied (according to his own account) under a Chinese doctor in Berlin, and having somehow acquired, or assumed, the title of Professor of Manual Therapy (he was very cross if he were described as a masseur), made a large fortune by massaging the high aristocracy and high plutocracy of Northern Europe. During the war, Himmler discovered the remarkable therapeutic skill of Kersten and made him (under duress, Kersten would afterward claim) his personal doctor. Kersten clearly had a magical touch: he could cure all kinds of pains by massage. In particular, he could cure at once, as no one else could, Himmler's excruciating stomach cramps. To Himmler, he became absolutely indispensable, and being indispensable, could exact almost any price. One

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price which he exacted was financial. He became richer than ever, the possessor of a fine feudal estate at Harzwalde near Berlin, as well as two houses in neutral Sweden against emergency—a town house in a fashionable quarter of Stockholm and a quiet rural retreat among the lakes of southern Sweden. Another price which Kersten exacted was human lives: he was the only man who, by his influence with Himmler, could cause that otherwise inexorable ogre to open the doors of death cells and prison camps. As Himmler himself put it, Kersten "massages a life out of me with every rub." These merciful interventions, too, were beneficial to Kersten's private economy, for he did not disdain reward and he was particularly sensitive to the agonies of those who could pay well. He showed great energy in rescuing some very rich Swedish businessmen who had been arrested in Warsaw. But there were times when he would intervene on behalf of less opulent victims. Thus he persuaded Himmler to release the *Bibelforscher* or Jehovah's Witnesses, who had been imprisoned as pacifists. But here, too, charity found its reward on earth. Kersten then used the liberated *Bibelforscher* as grateful and inexpensive laborers on his rural estate.

Kersten was not much liked by Himmler's other courtiers, who were naturally jealous of his phenomenal success. The court astrologer, Dr. Wulf, in particular, was green with envy. But with the great man himself, Kersten went from strength to strength. He evidently had a cozy bedside manner. In the evenings, after a good day's work expediting the holocaust, Himmler would relax; and sitting by the fire, or lying on the couch and submitting to the consolatory pummeling of his corpulent masseur, he would discourse amiably and freely about the high ideals, the grandiose plans, and the tragic frustrations of a Grand Inquisitor. In the course of these unbuttoned conversations (which he would afterward record in his copious diaries), Kersten would learn all about his patient's psychology: the prejudices which must be respected, the arguments to which he would yield, and the times when he was most yielding. Sooner or later, everyone who wanted anything from Uncle Heinrich knew that the way to achieve it was by enlisting the aid of *der dicke Buddha*, the fat Buddha, Felix Kersten.

In the last weeks of the war, Kersten persuaded Himmler to release all the Scandinavian prisoners in concentration camps, and some others, and to allow the Swedish Red Cross to transport them to Sweden—an enterprise for which the president of the Swedish Red Cross, Count Folke Bernadotte, afterward improperly took all the credit. This understandably exasperated Kersten, who was relying on his humanitarian activities in order to work his passage home. In his indignation against Bernadotte, Kersten involved himself in some equally improper maneuvers which need not detain us now. Suffice it that, in spite of some

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difficulties, he, alone of the "political doctors" of the Third Reich, survived the catastrophe of 1945 almost intact. He lost his castle at Harzwalde, of course: that is now in the Eastern Zone; but from his new base in Sweden, he continued his profitable international operations in Holland and Germany. He even extended them to Paris, where the daughter of a French millionaire, cured at last, kept a statue of him in a niche in her elegant apartments for daily veneration; and he would become the hero of a best-selling French novel, Joseph Kessel's *Les Mains du Miracle* (*The Man with the Miraculous Hands*). Prosperous to the last, he died suddenly in 1960, while on his rounds, massaging a new generation of German millionaires in Düsseldorf.

Such was Felix Kersten, *Leibarzt*, masseur, confidant, and confessor of the Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler. Although I still instinctively shudder at the thought of anyone touching the skin of that fish-cold mass murderer, I cannot help feeling a certain weakness for this unorthodox practitioner, who with peasant greed and peasant slyness combined a saving benevolence and a saving naiveté. He believed that, by massaging the second most powerful man in Hitler's Reich, the grim executioner who turned all conquered Europe into a factory of death, he was a political figure in his own right; and he expressed the hope that he might somehow obtain a recommendation to massage Stalin too. Then, he supposed, by alternately pummeling the stomachs of Himmler and Stalin, he would bring harmony to a stricken age and be venerated not merely in a niche in a Paris apartment but throughout the world, as the Prince of Peace. This I find a somewhat engaging fantasy, like those medieval stories of Saint Dunstan, who domesticated the Devil by pulling his nose.

Felix Kersten did not go to Stalin's Russia. Would he have prospered there, as chance had enabled him to do in Hitler's Germany? I am not sure. In order to answer the question, let us go there ourselves, in imagination. If we do so, we shall find that the medical implications of tyranny, like tyranny itself, are indivisible. For there, too, we shall find medical doctors engaged in surprising nonmedical activities. They are not quite the same as those of Morell and Brandt at Hitler's court, and they are more sinister than those of Kersten at that of Himmler. But they illustrate the same general point. In order to understand their history, we must go back a little further in time, to 1934.

III

From 1934 onward Stalin was busy consolidating his rule over Russia by a series of great purges, periodically enlivened by spectacular trials. The process had begun in that year with the murder of Kirov, the Party

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boss of Leningrad, whose power at that time rivaled that of Stalin. We now know that it was Stalin himself who had ordered and arranged the murder of Kirov; but at the time, this little detail was well concealed, and the purges began ostensibly as an act of vengeance against the supposed murderers. In this neat way Stalin gradually got rid of all his "old Bolshevik" rivals. By 1938 it was the turn of three men whom Stalin saw as the last remaining rivals to himself. These were Rykov, Bukharin, and Yagoda. Bukharin had once been regarded as Lenin's natural successor. Yagoda, the former head of the NKVD, was particularly dangerous because he had organized the murder of Kirov and knew the secrets both of that death and of the subsequent purge. For these last rivals Stalin prepared a great show trial; but as he did nothing hastily or inconsiderately, he began by introducing an interesting innovation: another "play within the play," or rather, a curtain raiser before the main tragedy. This curtain raiser was the trial of the doctors, the revelation of the so-called medical plot.

Five Russian doctors were put on trial on this occasion. One of them, Dr. Levin, was, or had been, Stalin's own doctor. He and two others had given satisfactory proof of political docility in the past: they had signed death certificates showing that two of Stalin's earlier victims had died of natural causes. But these past services did not avail them now. Now they were accused of having used medical means, either by deliberately giving incorrect treatment or by deliberately withholding correct treatment, in order to murder four important Soviet figures who, in fact, if they had been murdered, by these or other means, had been murdered on Stalin's orders. All five doctors were duly found guilty and sentenced. Two of them—Dr. Levin and Dr. Pletnev—were executed; the other three died in penal camps. They may all have been innocent of these particular charges. But their guilt or innocence is of minor importance. The purpose of their trial was not to discover the facts or even to destroy the doctors (though they were destroyed) but, through them, to reach their supposed employers: that is, Rykov, Bukharin, and Yagoda. The stratagem worked as planned. Rykov, Bukharin, and Yagoda were duly condemned and executed.

Fourteen years later, the medical plot of 1938 had a bizarre sequel. We are now in the winter of 1952–53, and Stalin, who is by now seventy-three years old, is aware that things are not going according to plan. His forward policy, aiming at revolution throughout Europe, has been checked. The successful defiance of Tito in Yugoslavia has been a very serious blow in itself and a very dangerous example to the vassal communist states of Eastern Europe. It has also led to doubts and secret criticism in the Politburo, whose members are already adjusting themselves to the coming struggle for the succession. In these circumstances,

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Stalin has become more suspicious than ever, quicker than ever to believe that his colleagues are conspiring against him. It is against this background that we must see the dramatic events of those winter months: the mounting once again, as in 1934 and by identical stages, of the well-tried machinery of a great purge.

Stalin's first step was to strengthen the engines of repression, appointing a new and therefore entirely dependent Minister of State Security, Ignatiev. Then he summoned a new Party Congress—the first since 1939—to declare the new Party line. He published (ominous sign) a new commentary on Leninism. At the Congress, contrary to expectation, he gave no hint about his successor; but he added fifteen new members to the Politburo, thereby setting up, as it were, an alternative Politburo of reliable creatures ready to replace, if necessary, those older colleagues who had been his accomplices in the former Great Purge. One of the new recruits was Ignatiev, who would, of course, be the essential instrument in any new purge. All these signs pointed to a purge of the old Politburo, whose members now began to shake in their shoes. One of them was suddenly forbidden to attend meetings. Another found a microphone concealed in his house. "You never know where you are with Stalin," said a third. "He invites you as a friend, and there you sit, never knowing where you will go next: home or to gaol."

Then, on January 13, 1953, came an announcement which must have sounded very ominous to the old members of the Politburo. A number of doctors, they were told, had been arrested and had made some very interesting confessions. They had confessed that they had murdered Andrei Zhdanov in 1948, and that they had undertaken to murder other friends of comrade Stalin. Zhdanov had been the advocate of the forward policy which had failed. After its failure he had suddenly perished. His death had been very useful to Stalin: he was the scapegoat for past failure. Now he could be useful again: he could be the new Kirov whose death would be the excuse for a new purge. And once again this purge was to be inaugurated by the curtain raiser of a medical plot.

For, of course, now as then, the significance of the medical plot is obvious. At the time, commentators, noting that the doctors were Jewish, saw their arrest as the beginning of an anti-Semitic purge. But from Stalin's point of view this was merely an extra advantage. It made them doubly expendable. No one would murmur when they were tried, sentenced, executed. By then, they would have fulfilled their function. That function, now as before, was to create evidence against their alleged patrons. And who could doubt who those patrons would be shown to be? They would be the members of the old Politburo, who would then, on this evidence, be tried, sentenced, executed.

I think there can be no doubt that in his last months Stalin was

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planning a new great purge exactly comparable with that of 1934. The method to be followed was exactly the same. It had, after all, worked very well the first time, so why not repeat the formula? The doctors, once again, would be sacrificial victims. Not that we need waste any sympathy on them. For just as the intended victims, the old members of the Politburo, were themselves the profiteers of the first great purge, the men who had helped Stalin to send the old Bolsheviks to their doom, so the doctors who were now to be sacrificed were—or included—their medical accomplices: the "experts" whose false evidence had been an essential part of that grim stratagem. Now they were to be repaid in their own coin; and who shall say that they did not deserve such a fate?

In fact they escaped it. Before they could be brought to trial, Stalin suddenly died. For the old members of his Politburo, he could not have died more opportunely. Perhaps they had helped him on his way. Perhaps the doctors did at last play the part for which they were billed. At all events, thanks to Stalin's death, his old accomplices survived; and having survived, they took immediate steps to dismantle the machinery so recently mobilized against them. After they had accompanied Stalin to his mausoleum, intoned their funeral panegyrics, and shed their prudent crocodile tears, they proceeded to business. The new alternative Politburo was dismissed. Ignatiev disappeared without trace. The trial of the doctors was wound up. The evidence against them, it has now been discovered, had been obtained by torture. "If you do not obtain confessions from the doctors," Stalin had told Ignatiev, "we shall shorten you by a head"; and so Ignatiev had obtained them by the method which Stalin himself had recommended: "Beat, beat and beat again." Although the doctors escaped with their lives, it had been a damned close-run thing, and a salutary reminder of the perils of their profession. Altogether I am not sure that Kersten was unlucky in failing to secure an appointment as court doctor to Joseph Stalin.

IV

I have dwelt on these episodes of medical history, not for their own sake, but because they illustrate what we can call, from our safe vantage point in a liberal society, an alternative tradition: alternative to the Hippocratic tradition which we take for granted. For, of course, it is not a new tradition. It is not even an Oriental, as distinct from a Western, tradition. It is in fact, I believe, a consequence of particular forms of power. And so we must expect to find it in other periods of history which have known comparable forms of power.

That form of power is not merely absolute government. The "enlightened despots" of the eighteenth century were "absolute," but we cannot

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conceive of them resorting to such desperate expedients, or of eighteenth-century doctors placing "political" considerations above their Hippocratic duties. No. If we are to find a parallel to the degradation of medicine by politics in our own century, we must look for an age which, like it, combined absolute power with ideological war. One such age immediately presents itself; and it is in it that we find men—a few men—whom we can compare with the "political" doctors of Hitler and Stalin. That age is what historians call the "early modern" period: the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the period of Renaissance and Reformation.

That period was great in medicine as in all intellectual endeavors. It is the age of Paracelsus and Vesalius, Paré and Harvey. But it was also an age, like our own, in which absolute power was sustained and made more terrible by ideology. Grim systems of belief, competing with one another and growing fiercer by competition, then claimed total loyalty; and because their claims were absolute, the hitherto absolute standards of the past—truth, justice, morality—were downgraded, made relative, made to depend on the cause which they served. Solemn oaths were declared to be no longer binding; or at least they bound only in one direction. The end was held to justify the means. And the end was defined as the interest of this or that church.

The Roman Catholic church, in particular, advanced and refined these doctrines. It found them in Italy, the Italy of the Renaissance. There the Venetian republic had begun the practice, and Machiavelli had elaborated the theory, of "reason of state": the assumption that the security of the state justified whatever measures were necessary to preserve it, even though those measures, in themselves, might be violations of universally accepted laws. Machiavelli felt it necessary to apologize for that necessity: he was uneasy about the subordination of morality to politics. But when his arguments were transferred from the politics of the state to those of the church, or from a secular state to a state that was consecrated as the organ of the church, such hesitations ceased. The church, fighting for its life against heresy, declared that "reason of state," if used in its service, needed no excuse: it was then positively virtuous, commendable in the eyes of God. Thus threatened, the heretics naturally replied in kind. They too adopted the fashionable new morality of "reason of state."

So in the wars of religion of the later sixteenth century, preachers on either side urged the faithful to gain merit in heaven, and perhaps canonization on earth, by murdering the enemies of God, like those saints of Israel who murdered Athaliah and Jezebel, Sisera and Holofernes. Assassination, in the name of ideology, was no longer a desperate expedient: it had become the highest duty of a totally committed

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ideologue. John Knox would call, in the name of God, for some saint to arise and murder Mary Queen of Scots; a Dominican friar would win the applause of the king of Spain for murdering the king of France; and Pope Pius V would ring the bells of Rome and order a Te Deum in Saint Peter's for the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew.

Where morality and truth had already been surrendered, the simple rules of a profession could hardly be maintained; and we cannot be surprised if, sometimes, medical doctors subordinated their Hippocratic oath to the "higher morality" of "reason of state." How many of the deaths of princes were really due to secret poison surreptitiously administered by confidential doctors hired by the enemies of their cause, we cannot say. The essence of the operation was its secrecy: like the puncture of the Bulgarian umbrella today, the subtle poison of the royal doctor was, prima facie, undetectable. Probably they were very few. But in that climate of opinion, the charge of poisoning was freely made and widely believed; and the duty of a faithful court doctor was to be prepared for the worst: he must know all the poisons to which his patient might be exposed and all the antidotes for them.

How little we know about the medical politics of the past! Sixteenth-century doctors did not found dynasties—or rather, they founded only medical dynasties, which lasted, perhaps, for three generations. Though they often made large fortunes, they did not, like politicians or lawyers or merchants, establish aristocratic families who would preserve their archives through centuries. I cannot think of a single noble family that was founded on medicine. Consequently the private diaries and letters of doctors seldom survive. Nor are they often mentioned in public documents. Though always in attendance on the great, they are always in their shadow, their own identity hidden from sight. However, through documentary accident or public scandal, we sometimes catch a glimpse of their activities; and such glimpses reveal, in these years of ideological war, a world of medical politics as intense, competitive, and ruthless as that which we have discerned in the comparable world of the twentieth century.

One such glimpse is given by some surviving fragments of the correspondence of a late sixteenth-century doctor, who has accidentally swum into my ken: Jean Ribit, sieur de la Rivière. Rivière was a Huguenot and had been appointed court physician to Henri of Navarre, the Huguenot who became Henri IV, king of France. As a Huguenot, Henri IV was on the death-list of the king of Spain, and he remained there even after his conversion to Catholicism, which he accepted as the price of his crown; for even as a Catholic he pursued a Huguenot—that is, an anti-Spanish—foreign policy and remained the patron of international heresy. Consequently, la Rivière, as his court doctor, lived in

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continuous apprehension of poison. One of his first acts, on taking up his post, was to write to his medical friends in Protestant countries, soliciting up-to-date professional advice in the matter.

One of these letters was addressed to an old friend and fellow medical student, Sigismund Kolreuter, now physician of the duke of Saxony. Kolreuter, in reply, obligingly sent to la Rivière details of an infallible antidote called "the Saxon powder." This powder, he said, had been invented and sold to the duke by an Italian monk. The duke had himself tested it thoroughly, swallowing the poison of toads, snakes, and other supposedly poisonous creatures and then correcting it with this infallible antidote. Another German doctor, Ludwig Camerarius, also answered la Rivière's questions on this subject. Expressing his horror that the enemies of France, having achieved nothing by war, were seeking to destroy the king by methods that were forbidden and detested even among the heathen, he sent a list of the best antidotes known to him, including the Saxon powder "which I was, I think, the first to communicate to my friends, a few years ago," and—even better, as he now believed—a mixture of quince- and citrus-juice. The late king of Sweden, he remarked, had used extract of gentian in some liquid, to be taken whenever poison was suspected. Some philosophers believed that precious stones, used as amulets, could counteract the effects of poison, but Camerarius was skeptical about that.

A few years later Henri IV was visited, in great secrecy, by another German prince, Christian of Anhalt. Christian was the political adviser—the fatal adviser, as it turned out—of the Calvinist Elector Palatine; and he was seeking to organize an ideological alliance and crusade against the Catholic Habsburgs of Spain and Austria. Naturally he lived in fear of poison; and being himself an amateur chemist, he had made a careful study of the subject. In Paris he gave a personal demonstration to the royal doctors. He was a homeopathist and had adopted a homeopathic antidote, which he had learned from a soldier returned from Hungary. It was compounded of viper's organs, dried and powdered. He told the royal doctors various stories of its efficacy and then proved it by swallowing the potion in their presence. The royal doctors obediently followed suit and were much impressed. Since it was well known to the ancients that snake poison is harmless when drunk, their admiration is surprising.

Throughout the reign of Henri IV, the fear of poisoning by the ideological enemy haunted his doctors. He himself, even as a Catholic, preferred Huguenots about his person: Catholics might be too Catholic—Catholic *dévots* in the service of Spain. But in the end, when the Huguenots were beginning to regard him as unsound, he turned around and insisted that his doctors, like himself, should become Catholic.

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Conformity, it seems, was safest of all. On one occasion, when a Huguenot royal doctor refused to be converted, and so disqualified himself for the highest post of *premier médecin*, the Huguenots begged the great minister, the duc de Sully, being a Huguenot, to press his case. But Sully replied that he made it a rule never to recommend either doctors or cooks at court. The reason is obvious: doctors and cooks could be the agents of poisoners and so could be the ruin of their patrons. The same self-denying ordinance was adopted in the next reign by the Cardinal Richelieu. It was a rule which would have been prudent in twentieth-century Moscow.

In the end, Henri IV was indeed assassinated in the Spanish interest, but not by poison or through his doctors. In fact there are very few proven cases of treachery by doctors; here again, priests were far more dangerous. There is, however, one famous case in English history whose details are still disputed. It is an episode in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who was also, like Henri IV, on the hit-list of the king of Spain. The central figure in it was her court physician, Dr. Rodrigo Lopez.

V

Dr. Lopez was a Portuguese Jew who had studied in Portugal and had then come to England. He was made a member of the Royal College of Physicians and was the first house physician at Saint Bartholomew's Hospital. He had a wide private practice and was employed as personal physician, first by Sir Francis Walsingham and the earl of Leicester, the leaders of the radical, Puritan, anti-Spanish party at court, then by the queen herself. Rich, cosmopolitan, and influential, his life seemed to be a perfect success story. Unfortunately he could not resist the lure of politics, and soon he was dabbling in international intrigue, which would be his ruin.

His opportunity came in 1585 when England, being at war with Spain, gave asylum to a pretender to the crown of Portugal (which had recently been taken over by the king of Spain). This pretender was called Don Antonio, prior of Crato. Protected by Leicester and the Puritan party, he was given lodgings in Eton College, near the royal castle of Windsor; and Dr. Lopez, as a fellow countryman already established at court, became his confidential intermediary with the queen. Later, in 1593, Don Antonio was joined by another émigré, Antonio Pérez. As King Philip's former secretary, Pérez had helped the king to murder his fellow secretary, Juan de Escovedo, who had become inconvenient. Then, having fallen foul of his master, he had made a dramatic escape abroad and was to become the most effective propagan-

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dist against Philip II throughout Europe. In England, he too became involved with Dr. Lopez, who was his natural guide in the labyrinth of a foreign court. King Philip had good reason to hate both these émigré Antonios, the pretender and the propagandist; and he would cheerfully have ordered the murder of them both. But his greatest enemy was their patroness, Queen Elizabeth, with whom he was now at open war. If only Queen Elizabeth would die, how much simpler his problems would be! Then the succession would be open and he could stuff in one of his own candidates. Originally, his candidate had been the imprisoned Mary Queen of Scots; but she had been executed in 1587, and now he was running his own daughter, the Infanta Isabel. But to assassinate a fellow sovereign was a delicate matter; it would have to be managed very discreetly. This was the background to the intrigues of Dr. Lopez.

Through Don Antonio, Dr. Lopez became the center of a whole circle of Portuguese émigrés who had accompanied or followed the pretender to England. But not all these émigrés remained loyal to their leader. Some of them were recruited as double agents to work against him by Philip's ambassador in Paris, Don Bernardino de Mendoza, who acted as his spy-master in Northern Europe. Nor was Dr. Lopez himself loyal for long. In fact, within a short time, he too was drawn into the Spanish espionage system, and he offered, for an adequate reward, guaranteed in writing, to poison Don Antonio. There is no evidence that he conspired against Queen Elizabeth; but like Dr. Kersten, he had illusions of political grandeur. He saw himself as the man who, for his central position as a Portuguese Jew at the English court, could make peace between Catholic Spain and Protestant England. To eliminate the émigré leaders in England would be a step in this direction; for they, of course, were among the chief fomenters of war, in which they had a clear interest. In order to achieve his purpose, Dr. Lopez kept in constant touch both with his intended victim, the Portuguese pretender, and with his necessary intermediaries, the Portuguese double agents, who regularly stayed at his house in London and reported back to their paymaster, the Spanish ambassador in Paris.

Unfortunately for himself, Dr. Lopez had reckoned without the English government, and particularly without the war party, which was now headed by a man very powerful at court: Leicester's stepson and successor, the earl of Essex. The letters of the Portuguese double agents were regularly intercepted by the English government, which thus knew that Dr. Lopez was in secret communication with Spain. This alone was enough to arouse the suspicions of Essex, and since Essex was the patron both of Don Antonio, the pretender, and of Antonio Pérez, it is likely that they too were aware of the facts. In these circumstances it was essential for them to destroy Dr. Lopez before Dr. Lopez destroyed

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them. Luckily for them, Dr. Lopez soon played into their hands by making a fatal mistake. Like Dr. Gebhardt, he spoke too freely at a drinking party.

The party was at Windsor. There one evening, as the wine flowed, in the presence of the two Antonios, Dr. Lopez enlarged on the unorthodox sexual tastes of the earl of Essex. His two friends (if we may use that phrase) seized their opportunity. They reported the slander to their patron, who thereupon vowed to have the Jew's blood. And he did. Dr. Lopez's intrigues were revealed and reinterpreted. He was accused of seeking to poison the queen in the interest of the king of Spain. He was tried by a commission presided over by the earl of Essex, and found guilty of high treason. The queen was very reluctant to accept the verdict and hesitated long before signing the death warrant; but in the end she was convinced, and in June 1594 the unfortunate Dr. Lopez was hanged, drawn, and quartered to the jubilation of the patriotic, anti-Semitic London mob. Whether he was guilty or not is still disputed; but at least, in one sense, he did not die in vain. He was almost certainly the inspiration behind Christopher Marlowe's play *The Jew of Malta*, a terrible anti-Semitic tirade, and therefore has some indirect responsibility for the dignified rejoinder to it, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, a work which portrayed the Jew not as a diabolical stereotype but as a human being driven by persecution into resentment.

VI

The fate of Dr. Lopez was a terrible warning to political doctors, and after 1594 they were more circumspect; but in that age of absolutism, the type did not cease. Absolute power is no doubt very tempting and, as Lord Acton wrote, absolutely corrupting; but it is also very lonely, and those who wield it inevitably become very suspicious. Surrounded by rivals or flatterers, or by men who are both, they take refuge in the intimacy of men to whom they can speak freely, from whom they do not need to conceal their weaknesses, and who depend absolutely on them: whether priests, to whom they reveal their souls, or doctors, to whom they expose their bodies. But even priests and doctors can be tempted by power—the substance, not the form of it—and the age of absolutism provides many examples of medical men, as well as priests, who enjoyed and exploited in politics the confidence of princes.

Especially this was so in international affairs. Doctors, like priests, belonged to an international order. The ablest of them, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had studied and traveled abroad. They knew foreign languages and had foreign friends, who perhaps also had become influential at other courts. Public diplomacy might be carried out

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through ambassadors; but secret diplomacy needed unofficial agents. It is remarkable how often, in that age, it was entrusted to doctors. Doctors could travel unsuspected. They often accompanied their employers on journeys abroad. They visited each other. Princes lent them to each other. A series of English doctors attended the czars of Russia. Henri IV of France regularly used one of his doctors, Joseph du Chesne—another Huguenot like la Rivière—as his contact with the learned landgrave of Hesse, his chief ally among the German princes, and the landgrave used his own doctor, Dr. Mosanus, as his secret agent too. In fact, the most delicate diplomacy was left to the private discussions of these two doctors. But perhaps the most successful of these international agents among medical men was yet another Huguenot—the Huguenots then, like the Jews today, were the cosmopolitans of Europe—who, after the assassination of Henri IV, emigrated from France and became the chief physician of King James I of England: Sir Theodore de Mayerne.

Mayerne was a great figure in his day: a pioneer of chemical medicine and of new therapeutic methods, the most fashionable (and perhaps the most expensive) doctor in Europe. He kept his private practice in France even after settling in England, and for some time went regularly to France to see his grand patients, like Kersten doing his rounds in Europe. He even bought a castle in Switzerland and set up as a magnate there, for again, like Kersten, he had feudal tastes. He also, like Dr. Lopez, was an incorrigible (though more circumspect) dabbler in politics. James I used him as a political emissary to the Huguenot nobles in France, and the city of Geneva and the canton of Berne appointed him as their political agent in England. He was the universal confidant of the Protestant International in Europe. On one occasion he was expelled from France as a spy, which caused a terrible diplomatic rumpus: King James was furious, ambassadors were withdrawn on both sides, and outraged dignity took years to subside. In his heyday Mayerne gave political instructions to English ambassadors abroad and even (in suitably courtly language) to foreign princes. It was a far cry from the time, a few centuries earlier, when the king of England refused to use his doctor as a political intermediary because the secrets of princes, he said, should not be handled by men who inspected the urine of women.

Like Dr. Lopez and like Kersten, Mayerne saw himself as a peacemaker: doctors, he said, made war only on disease. Of course, he had an interest in peace: war was very disturbing to his international practice. At one time, early in the reign of Charles I, England was at war with France, and the hot patriots on each side suspected Sir Theodore of being a spy for the other. It was even suggested that he was another Dr. Lopez: a Judas who would betray his master. However, he survived all these hazards and died, very old, very fat, and very rich, having married

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his daughters into a ducal (but soundly Huguenot) family in France. Sir Theodore left a great mass of papers—he is, I suppose, the earliest doctor whose working papers survive—and through them we get a glimpse of the politico-medical world of the early seventeenth century: they provide a window into the secret politics of the baroque courts of Europe comparable with that provided in this century by the revelations with which I began this essay in despotic Germany and despotic Russia.

And what about liberal England, liberal America, and the liberal society which has generally prevailed in the civilized modern world until the new despotisms of this century arose? There, of course, we have had very able doctors whose wide interests have often overflowed the boundaries of medicine. There have been men of letters like Sir Thomas Browne, philosophers like John Locke, patrons of learning like Richard Meade in the eighteenth century, founders or benefactors of learned institutions like Sir Hans Sloane, poets like Erasmus Darwin, explorers like David Livingstone, scholars like Gregorio Marañón and Sir Geoffrey Keynes. These too are following a Renaissance tradition, the tradition of the doctor as a philosopher, even a universal man. But on the whole, in such societies, there is one area of life from which the doctor has religiously kept out, and that area is politics. The structure of politics, the psychological need, the opportunities, and the temptations are entirely foreign to the study of medicine; and I must say, having examined the evidence of those who, in differently organized societies, have tried to combine those two careers, I think that it is better so.

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Advent

(H. S. F., newborn December 1980)

CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK

The waters flood;
hugely the body
rules, as flesh, perfected, ready,
begins in water what it will complete in blood,

one darker than the other,
yet not less cleansing nor less innocent.
Hours pass, as months did, till our mother,
no jot left unperformed
of nature's common work,
prepared in nature's dark,
is hugely rent,
hugely heaves forth
this ordinary birth
into the winter wild;

another child
to be wrapped safe and warmed,

the skull,
its perfect eggshell full,
hazed, haloed with the usual hair,
and there,
passing belief, the fragile wrists, the fingers
starring our dark, green branching shoots in snow.

What passed belief the pulse proves out as true.
Hannah's small hands make all things new.

✪ CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK teaches English at Williams College and is the author of *The Siege: The First Eight Years of an Autistic Child.*

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Cooking with Prose

JOHN TAYLOR

FEW WRITERS OF MY ACQUAINTANCE COOK, which surprises me, for in the daily chore of cooking I long ago discovered the ideal antidote to the interminable grind of writing. Not that I equate the two: having tried my hand at both I can testify that writing is incomparably the more difficult, and perhaps for that reason alone literary achievement deserves the esteem it has always enjoyed. Yet with all respect to Socrates and his unflattering view of the culinary arts, cooking ought not to be dismissed, either as craft or therapy. What should matter to the writer who would balance his routine is that cooking and writing, while very different, are also complementary. By working at both, the writer gains perspective on the process of prose composition. Though he may not on that account—or perhaps on any other—grow and flourish as a writer, he will at least apprehend some of the peculiarities of the writer's task in ways that might not occur to him if he were never to stray into the kitchen.

Cooking is best accomplished standing up, and for such a respectable excuse to quit desk and chair I am always more than grateful. Once on my feet and in the kitchen I relish the novelty of having all my senses fully employed. This daily rediscovery of native capacity is one of the chief rewards of cooking. For writers it serves as a reminder that the act of writing—the conversion of ideas into words on paper—limits even as it emancipates. Notions that threaten to clot the mind are readily disposed of by writing them down, and precision in choosing the most effective words can precipitate sudden revelation. Though the desire to repeat these mysterious pulsations is understandable, the price paid for them is substantial. Hard work at writing imposes idleness on almost everything but the mind. Only the eyes are constantly engaged, but they do little more than distinguish black from white on a two-dimensional surface. Pen in hand is agreeable to the touch, and it may be, as Auden once observed, that writers grow fond of their own handwriting. Yet even if calligraphy can be enjoyed as an unforeseen fringe benefit, that still leaves one hand totally unemployed while the other, which does all the work, performs motions of only one kind. Add to the dyspepsia of protracted inactivity the lower back pains well known to the sedentary,

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✪ JOHN TAYLOR is writing a series of essays on workmanship and its place in American life.

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and it will be evident that writers need to do something besides write.

Until running overtook this frenetic age, long walks used to be the customary restorative of the literati, and if it were not for deadlines, I could happily tramp the city all day long, with or without literary aspirations. As it is, I make do with an afternoon tour of the neighborhood markets on Broadway. Although making the rounds can become a bore, especially when it rains, I am nevertheless persuaded that the writer who cooks should also do the marketing.

To eat well is to eat fresh, according to the season, and fortunately for those who weary of the fossil-like timelessness of frozen food, the cycle of the seasons persists. Shad, for example, remains a spring fish, found in the market at no other time of year. Similar limitations still apply to many other fish as well as to some fruits and vegetables, despite the best efforts of agribusiness to stretch the seasonal into the perennial. Learning to buy as the seasons dictate does more than relieve the dailiness of cooking while assuring a steady succession of fugitive treats. Rooting about in the market brings home to me the writer's unnerving freedom from material constraint.

When choosing words instead of produce I have the entire language to reckon with, not just in the spring or fall or whenever the weather happens to oblige, but every damn time I sit down to write. Nouns, verbs, and modifiers are always in season, and most of them hold steady in price, just as infinitives—whether split, filleted, or left whole—never go soft. Indeed, the perpetual readiness of every last word in *Webster's* mocks my dwarfish vocabulary and punctures dreams of facility and reach.

Yet these reminders of the disproportion between wealth of resources ready to hand and the meager use I contrive to make of them daunt me less than they console. The more distant the destination, the more sensible it would seem to relax about getting there. Writers serve an apprenticeship that lasts a lifetime, and they will refuse, if they are wise, to let their sentence get them down. It is my contention that their morale will improve once they learn their way around the kitchen. For even though cooking is easier than writing, to the extent that Nature does half the job and more, the cook faces a test every time he sets to work, a test that would make most writers quail had they to address themselves to their typewriters on comparable terms.

No writer expects to produce finished work all at a single stroke, yet this is precisely what the cook must do. In the home kitchen there are no preliminary drafts because none of us could afford the ingredients needed for the luxury of a second try. Either you get it right the first and only time, or you sit down to a bungled dinner. Before dishing up you can "correct the seasonings," but beyond that the opportunity to revise

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and polish, which is indispensable to the writer, is almost entirely denied the cook. If the baked red snapper is overdone, then you dine on overdone snapper—which in view of the expense and the disappointment becomes a powerful incentive to learn how to do better. Although learning to cook will at first seem a chore, the writer who perseveres will discover the joy of working for a payoff that is both immediate and all but guaranteed. For however original the cook might be in applying the creative touch, the task he performs remains chiefly mechanical, and consequently he never need fear the culinary equivalent of writer's block. When I go out to the kitchen after a trying day at the typewriter, I can comfort myself with the certainty that, if I pay attention, the meal I have in mind—*eros con pollo* or *esteamed mussels*—will be on the table ninety minutes hence. It is this prompt and predictable return on effort that makes cooking the writer's surest relief. Compared with the potential satisfactions of authorship, the pleasures of cooking are momentary and slight. I can seldom recall what I cooked a week ago or how my concoctions were received. But for the cook who scribbles or the scribbler who cooks, daily experience of transitory success in the kitchen can fortify the ambition to write something good enough to last, at least for a generation.

To be read at all, even once—that would seem the more sensible aspiration since the only payoff most writers can count on is to be ignored. It will be said that most of them deserve to be, but even so, I still hope for readers who will take as much interest in what I write as my dinner guests demonstrate in what I cook. True to form the diners remain a good deal more attentive than the readers, and it was for this reason that Socrates scorned cooking. He called it "a mere knack," "a routine" that panders to the appetites and, in my view, there is much to be said for this estimate. At bottom, all that cooking amounts to is the manipulation of certain fixed processes over and over again, which is precisely the routine Socrates disdained. For every cook who actually understands the physics and biochemistry of these processes there must be dozens who do not. I know, for example, that mayonnaise is an emulsion created by beating olive oil into egg yolks. How or why the process works I have no idea, but I do know that it does, and since it works every time, I'm content to let it go at that. Which is to concede that in the kitchen I shirk the Socratic injunction to inquire into the fundamental nature of things, and therefore I refrain from protesting the philosopher's disesteem for the cook and his earthbound trade.

I wonder, though, how many writers have anything instructive to say about the origin and nature of their medium. Presumably the precision and economy of Evelyn Waugh's prose had something to do with his passion for the English language, yet there is nothing in his work to

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indicate that he either knew or cared what language is as defined by linguistic theory. So it may be that cooks have less to feel modest about, and writers possibly more, than we are accustomed to think, though I am far from suggesting that cooking and writing come to the same thing. Morally, perhaps, they do—at least Waugh would have said so, for he once declared that writing differs "... not at all from gardening or needlework or any other activity...." No doubt this profession of Christian humility was entirely sincere—Waugh was unable to think of "a single Saint who attached much importance to Art"—and even from a practical standpoint it has to be granted that writing, gardening, and needlework are indeed alike to the extent that proficiency in these occupations depends in part on vigilant attention to detail. But this common requirement should not be allowed to obscure some important differences.

However skilled a gardener may be, he still owes Nature chief credit for the repetitive splendors of his mums and tiger lilies. Writers, by contrast, know only too well that their Smith-Coronas, unlike flower beds, have no share in the spontaneous fecundity of Nature and consequently produce nothing of their own accord. As for needlework, better to compare it to cooking since the cook, like the tailor, strives to duplicate his best efforts. We do more than merely tolerate familiar dishes at the dinner table—we insist on our old favorites, and thus for the cook mastery of skill consists in the practiced ability to repeat himself on demand. Similarly, a piece of needlework is valued for orthodox consistency of stitch throughout, not for random and gratuitous novelty. Had Waugh actually modeled himself on a gardener or seamstress he might have been good for a limerick or two, but the novels for which he is celebrated could never have been written if he had made diligent self-repetition the cornerstone of his style.

There was more, however, to Waugh's conception of writing than mere piety. In an essay entitled "Sloth" he observed that "since I first set up as a writer nearly thirty-five years ago I have witnessed a lamentable decline of power in all the processes of literature." The cause of this decline, according to the author, was sloth, "the condition in which a man is fully aware of the proper means of his salvation and refuses to take them because the whole apparatus of salvation fills him with tedium and disgust." For writers the proper means of salvation is to "resolve that nothing shall leave the workshop which is not as perfectly finished as our talents allow." What may at first seem yet another counsel of perfection was in fact the sober ideal of a writer who liked to think of himself as a craftsman. Waugh's statement that "the actual process of writing is laborious and irksome" was in no sense a complaint. He was simply being matter-of-fact about the drudgery involved, and

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even though his novels were acclaimed as works of art, he refused to assume the title of Artist. For Waugh conceived of writing as a kind of handicraft, and in his regard for workmanlike constancy he might have agreed with Thorstein Veblen that workmanship consists in "taking pains."

In Veblen's scheme of things, workmanship is no mere "art, skill, or technique" as the dictionaries would have it, but rather the price one elects to pay for acquiring skill. Thus a workman worthy of the name chooses to take the pains necessary to learn the skill his craft requires. If in addition to taking pains he has the requisite aptitude or talent, he will at length attain to mastery of skill and thus produce work of the highest quality. Workmanship by itself is never enough, though the workman be ever so earnest. Talent remains indispensable to the cultivation of skill, yet the product of skill always rests on a foundation of workmanship.

This satisfying and dependable progression from initial effort to ultimate achievement is entirely foreign to the experience of most writers. However demanding some of the industrial and fine arts may be, they at least reward the dedicated with a sense of forward movement. By contrast, even accomplished writers would have difficulty in trying to locate themselves year by year on a scale of literary merit. Indeed they are lucky that no such scale could be devised since habit impels too many of them to go on writing long after they have demonstrated that their earliest work was their best. In his old age, Tennyson complained, "I am the greatest master of English that ever lived and I have nothing to say." Frustration of this sort appears to be unknown in the other vineyards of the muse. When a reporter asked Louis Armstrong to account for his longevity, Satchmo, then in his seventies, replied that his secret was "feelin' good and doin' what Ah lahk to do." What he most liked to do he had trained himself to do supremely well, and experience had taught him to feel confident of his ability to perform. It is difficult to imagine an Armstrong or a Calder echoing Tennyson's lament. Writers, it seems, meet with a fate all their own, as Eric Hoffer notes in his journal, *Before the Sabbath:*

> The day before he died, Renoir painted anemones with a brush strapped to his crippled fingers. When he finished he said: "I am beginning to learn how to paint anemones."
>
> On his deathbed Michelangelo said to Cardinal Salivati: "I regret that I die just as I am beginning to learn the alphabet of my profession."
>
> I cannot see a writer saying toward the end of his life that he is just beginning to learn how to write. A writer never knows he can write the way a painter knows he can paint or a sculptor knows he can sculpt or even a composer knows he can compose. Not long before his death Adam Smith observed that after all his practice in writing he composed as slowly and with as much difficulty as he had

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at first. V. S. Pritchett sees it as "one of the disgusts of the writer's life that he finds himself having to learn from the beginning again every time he puts pen to paper."

If Pritchett's experience is in fact the norm, as the piteous groans of countless scribblers suggest, then it follows that writing is anything but a handicraft. What to call it instead I'm at a loss to say; nor can I explain why Waugh held the opposite view. Conceivably his exceptional talent spared him the frustration that Pritchett describes—that is, Waugh may actually have attained to a sense of mastery so that taking pains over a task he found "laborious and irksome" was all he was really conscious of doing. ("I took pains with my work and I found it excellent"—thus the protagonist in *Work Suspended* who is, of course, a writer and might well have been Waugh himself.) Talent may have accounted for everything else, with the result that writing fiction seemed to Waugh primarily a matter of practical experience—or, in other words, a handicraft. This is not to hint that Waugh had it easy but rather to speculate that writers of uncommon talent may experience the process called writing in ways the less gifted do not. If Waugh thought of writing as a handicraft, perhaps for him it was. For most writers, however, it emphatically is not, much as they might wish it were. Square one remains their point of departure every time they begin a new piece of work.

Writers who cook are necessarily free of the delusion that writing is simply a craft like any other. Thus disabused of an attractive yet misleading conception of their task, they will refrain from expecting too much of themselves as writers. In my experience it is safer by far to pin your hopes on dinner. The dishes I serve up—mostly fish, chicken, pasta, eggs, and chowder—are almost entirely the product of practical experience governed by the habits of workmanship. In the kitchen taking pains is very nearly all you need. Talent in the form of imagination will enhance your handiwork by suggesting unexpected combinations, but rather little razzle-dazzle of this sort is needed or indeed welcome.

For the most part cooking—I exclude cooking so splendid as to qualify as art—is a typical handicraft in being chiefly a matter of workmanship. The pains you take will enlarge your fund of experience which in turn will guide you, the next time round, in your choice of pains to be taken. It is never a question, for example, of how long to cook a chicken, but rather how long to broil the particular bird you have in hand. Only with experience will you know when to declare it done, and as a novice you are likely to misread the signs. But as you methodically add to your store of experience, you will begin to produce broilers of a memorable perfection. How many chickens will have come to grief be-

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fore you master the knack will depend on your powers of concentration. Whereas a writer bogged down in mid-paragraph can gaze out the window without losing anything more than time, a cook seldom has a minute to spare once dinner is on the fire. Because many if not most of the basic cooking routines require speedy execution, tyros are advised to keep both eyes on the pot. A distraction lasting only a moment or two is sometimes all it takes to make a mess instead of a meal. With soups, stews, and beans you can take your time, but ordinarily a process already begun is best completed then and there. How refreshing it would be for writers if they could work at the same pace. Writing is a kind of marathon that tests endurance, and perhaps what writers need most of all is patience. Cooks get by with no such virtue since cooking is merely a sprint, but they do have to pay attention.

For the cook who might object that I underestimate the difficulty of cooking, I have what seems to me an unanswerable reply. The craft in which a craftsman can knock back a few drinks and still turn in an acceptable performance is clearly not all that demanding. In my experience, cooking allows a margin for drink which makes it one chore I enjoy. But I decline to advance claims for a craft in which I can usually count on satisfactory results even when half in the bag. A "mere knack" indeed. Nor are cooks the only craftsmen who take drink as well as pains. Years ago letterpress printing was a notably boozy trade, however much aesthetes now revere it as Craft. In his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin complained repeatedly of his fellow printers and their "detestable custom" of "sotting" while at work. Similarly, acting is generally accorded the status of Craft, except among fans who count it an Art, yet W. C. Fields would never report for work without a thermos of what he lovingly called his "pineapple juice," and by all accounts he was scarcely the last to uphold a hoary theatrical tradition.

Though writers are known to be fond of the bottle, few of them drink on the job. Many have tried, but not for long, though their prompt reform seldom owes much to virtue. It just happens that almost no one can write anything worth reading if even the least bit tight. Testimony to the truth of this unyielding axiom is nearly unanimous, and Waugh himself would probably concede the point if he could be confronted with his letters and diaries. It has been noted that one reason the letters are such a good read is that he wrote them in the morning when sober, whereas the diaries, which he kept at night after he had had a few (and most nights more than a few), might better be left to the literary historians. For the trouble with drink, as Dr. Johnson put it, is that it "makes a man mistake words for thoughts."

But whatever the writer's condition when cooking or the cook's when writing, the question is bound to arise: Why take pains? Why put

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yourself out in the service of promptings that may be shown to spring from nothing more commendable than the vanity of mere perfectionism? Veblen theorized that workmanship is an "instinct" that finds expression in our demonstrable "proclivity" for painstaking labor, but these are dated words redolent of a determinism no longer in vogue. Waugh might have said something about Christian duty, for in "Sloth" he lays it down that "man is made for joy in the love of God, a love which he expresses in service." Yet Waugh the would-be craftsman said something quite different in a letter to Thomas Merton. In response to a piece of writing Merton had sent him for comment, Waugh pronounced his prose "diffuse" and added: "Your monastery tailor and bootmaker would not waste material. Words are our material."

This metaphor may seem incongruous to anyone familiar with Robert Graves's advice that writers should make the wastebasket their best friend. Because words come free and the supply is inexhaustible there would seem no need to conserve them the way a cook might go easy on the butter. Indeed, writers must guard against becoming so attached to the words they have piled up that they cannot bring themselves to cut and rewrite. Warning against misplaced compassion, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch urged writers to "murder your darlings," and thus proposed a kind of literary infanticide. In his no-nonsense republic of letters, flashy metaphors, gratuitous neologisms, and other misbegotten turns of phrase would be denied the right to life. Does Waugh's metaphor meet this standard? Or should it have been abandoned on some figurative hillside?

Somehow the conceit that words are the writer's material seems to work. Waugh understood that the first and perhaps most urgent reason a craftsman has for taking pains is to acquire the skill that will enable him to use scarce and costly materials with the utmost economy. Presumably Waugh also understood that the writer's real material is an intangible called thought. The objection, then, to wasting words is that prolixity squanders thought by rendering it needlessly obscure. Thought worthy of expression, though free in the material sense, is by no means plentiful—hence the need to conserve. Since the communication of thought for whatever purpose is the only intelligible reason a writer could have for writing, it may be that precision in the choice of words is the ultimate literary virtue. Taking the pains to be precise defeats both parsimony and extravagance. The reward is thought expressed in full yet with no words left over to befog the text.

Though leftovers on the dinner table pose scarcely the same problem, cooks as much as writers have to practice economy, albeit of a different kind. Food wasted is gone for good, whereas words can be recycled indefinitely, including all those unforgettable mots a contrary

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fate may some day force you to eat. But except during times of scarcity, the imperative to thrift is secondary. To the seasoned cook it matters more that taking pains in the kitchen has the paradoxical effect of relieving the tedium of what would otherwise remain sheer drudgery. Fortunately for those who follow other trades this paradox extends well beyond the kitchen. Thus the extra effort that Veblen called workmanship redeems the practical arts and crafts by establishing scope for the workman's sense of play. When making that effort I am sustained by a feeling of insistent yet agreeable tension. Am I taking enough pains and in the right way so as to bring off the dish already promised? The satisfactions of release from this self-imposed suspense require nothing in the way of haute cuisine or the gourmet's fastidious complications. A mere fried egg over easy with the yolk intact and no frizzle around the edge can be enough to launch my day. For what matters to the enjoyment of workmanship is less the absolute degree of difficulty attempted than the exercise of precise judgment as required by the particular job in hand. Sizing up a job and getting it right is always something of a gamble, even when the stakes seem absurdly small. Yet if winning that gamble is the point of workmanship, that's all the incentive I'll ever need.

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December

ROBERT LONG

It's the middle of December,
And I'm trying to sleep in a strange bed.
Downstairs, the furnace clicks on,
And plaster starts to rumble.
Upstairs, a knee knocks the wall.

I'm thinking of you,
And you don't deserve it.
Imagine the particular smash of a brick
Thrown through plate glass,
Or a boot grinding anything to pulp;

That's how I'm thinking of you.
But never mind; if anything happened
Like that, I'd be the first one there,
With all sorts of lifesaving devices.
Too bad.

Anyhow, sucker, maybe you'll be walking
Down the street someday,
And everything will change:
Cracks in cement will seem abysmal,
Faces nasty maps of ill-led lives,

Even the trees will be threatening,
As in bad movies,

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And your life will make a U-turn for the worst.
I wish this on you, I wish you
Forced to think harder than you've ever had to,

And then maybe you'll realize
That soon you'll be as dead as anything.
The world will continue for billions of years
Without your dim light,
Which grows dimmer by the minute,

The more I let myself think of you,
Wasting my own short time.

✪ ROBERT LONG teaches writing and literature at Southampton College. His poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *Partisan Review*, and other journals. His book, *What It Is*, will soon be published by Street Press.

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Squid

MICHAEL BLUMENTHAL

So this is love:

How you grimace at the sight
of these fish. How I pull
(forefinger, then thumb) the fins
and tails from the heads, slice
the tentacles from the accusing eyes.

Then how I pile the silvery ink sacs
into the sieve like old fillings, heap
the entrails and eyes on a paper towel,
and how you sauté the onions and garlic,
how they turn soft and transparent, lovely
in their own way, and how you turn to me
and say, simply, *isn't this fun, isn't it?*

And something tells me this all has to do
with love, perhaps more than lust or even
happiness have to do with love: How
the fins slip easily from the tails, how
I peel the membranes from the fins and cones
like a man peeling his body from a woman after love.
How these ugly squid diminish in grotesqueness
and all nausea reduces, finally, to a hunger
for what is smooth and approachable,

naked and delicious.

MICHAEL BLUMENTHAL's first book of poems is *Sympathetic Magic*. He is at work on a second book to be entitled *Wishes that Could Last a Lifetime*.

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Gilbert Murray

HUGH LLOYD-JONES

ABOUT A HUNDRED YEARS AGO—he did not know whether it was in 1879 or 1880—an argumentative redheaded Australian boy entered Merchant Taylors' School, then in its old buildings in Charterhouse Square. Gilbert Murray was to become a universally respected figure, not only the main propagandist for Greek studies for more than half a century but a leading Liberal and a powerful advocate of the League of Nations. Half in and half out of the academic world, he was the friend of many celebrated persons—of Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell, of William Archer and Sybil Thorndike, of Asquith and H. A. L. Fisher. His translations of Greek drama were staged successfully over a long period; during his lifetime they sold nearly four hundred thousand copies. He received the Order of Merit and the German order *Pour le Mérite*; he came near to being appointed British ambassador in Washington; a lifelong atheist, he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

It would be idle to pretend that Murray's fame has suffered no diminution since his death. Gladstonian Liberalism is a thing of the past, and its values are commonly derided, even by those who are in a sense its spiritual descendants. Even during his lifetime his famous translations were devastatingly attacked, and they are now seldom read. His academic work, like that of most scholars after a generation or so, is in large measure superseded, and I know gifted young scholars to whom it means little, though at the time it helped to make possible the work of younger writers and meant much to them. Yet Gilbert Murray was a figure of uncommon interest, whose place in the political and cultural history of his time remains important, or so I believe. Whether or not that is true, he was an unusual and remarkable human being; and since at the end of his long life I was the last person who got to know him well, I can describe the impression that he made on me.

Gilbert Murray was born in Sydney on January 2, 1866. The ancestors of his father, Sir Terence Murray, had come to Ireland from Scotland in the seventeenth century and had become thoroughly Hibernicized. They had taken part in every Irish rising against England; one had lost his father and six brothers fighting for James II against William III in the

HUGH LLOYD-JONES is the author of *The Justice of Zeus* and translator of Aeschylus and Semonides.

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Battle of the Boyne. Despite residing in Australia, Gilbert Murray's family remained Irish in their attitudes: radical in politics; skeptical in religion, with occasional bouts of Roman Catholicism; critical of England. Sir Terence had been a rich man, owning three fine cattle stations, but droughts and floods destroyed his wealth, so that he ended by having to sell his splendid library. In a tough school in the bush, the young Gilbert learned to hold his own; his fierce hatred of cruelty led him into many fights. He was not an antagonist to be discounted, for he was far from unathletic. He was a good enough cricketer to make forty in the Freshmen's Match at Oxford, and when a visiting team of Australian aborigines staged a boomerang demonstration, Murray proved himself as good as any of them. He had an extraordinary sense of balance that helped him to cross Swiss glaciers on foot, and at seventy he could still walk up a ladder without using his hands. At his Sydney school he had started to study Greek, which fascinated him from the outset (the first word of it he learned was Μοῦσα, or the Muse).

After his father's death, his mother—born Agnes Edwards, of Welsh descent—brought him to England in January 1877; he nearly went to Malvern, but fortunately Merchant Taylors' turned out to cost less. It supplied a good classical education; Hebrew was among the subjects studied, though it was not well taught. Murray felt respect for the headmaster, Dr. Baker, and for Mr. Bampfylde, who taught the sixth form. But the master who taught him most was Francis Storr, who, though head of the modern side, was a good classical scholar in the severe Cambridge manner. "He knew how to make us think and enjoy literature," Murray wrote in the unfinished autobiography published after his death, "opening up to us the vision of another world." At Merchant Taylors' Murray must have worked hard at Greek and Latin, for he excelled in translation of English verse and prose into both languages, "the one form of art," as he wrote, "which the traditional education of the day supplied." But he also read widely in modern literature. Mill, Spencer, and Comte influenced his opinions; Shelley and Swinburne were his favorite poets, both for their style and for their matter. In 1884 he won a Merchant Taylors' scholarship to St. John's College, Oxford.

The Oxford education of that day laid a grossly exaggerated emphasis on translation from English into Greek and Latin, and proficiency in that exercise was then popularly equated with classical scholarship, as it still is by old gentlemen who write to the newspapers from their clubs to argue whether Raymond Asquith or Ronald Knox was the finest classical scholar of his time. Most of the Oxford tutors for Moderations, the first part of the School of Literae Humaniores, thought it their main duty to coach their pupils in this accomplishment. The absurdity of this was

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evident, to nobody more so than to Murray, who later did much to redress the balance; but the value of the exercise to someone well qualified to profit from it is considerable, and the disrepute into which it has now fallen is to be regretted. First, it forces the student to look closely at a piece of English writing and consider what it really means. (I remember being asked to translate an apparently brilliant account of the contradictory character of Gladstone by Lytton Strachey and being forced to the conclusion that it meant hardly anything at all, being simply a collection of cheaply paradoxical antitheses.) Second, the shape and syntax of ancient and modern languages are so different that the student is forced to recast and completely refashion in his mind the content of the text for translation. Finally, the student acquires a grasp of ancient grammar, syntax, and meter that is not easily acquired by other methods.

A great many of the translations into Greek and Latin published by Victorian scholars are mere centos of tags taken directly from ancient writers; few will stand up to examination by professional scholars well acquainted with the models. Murray's compositions form a remarkable exception; I do not think any others, except the Greek prose versions of J. D. Denniston, are their equals.

Later, when Murray taught translation at Oxford, the exercise became in his hands an educational weapon of the highest power. Not surprisingly, he was supremely successful in the university scholarships and in the schools; he won the Ireland and Hertford scholarships in his first year, added three other prizes, and obtained First Classes in both Mods and Greats. At the earliest possible moment, in 1888, he was elected to a fellowship at New College.

The Oxford of the time included a few scholars of international eminence, like Ingram Bywater, the Aristotelian expert, and D. B. Monro, the authority on Homer; but we hear nothing of Murray's personal contact with them, and perhaps he found them dry. He had a good tutor in the kindhearted and eccentric radical T. C. Snow; he was kindly treated by the learned but silly Professor of Latin, Robinson Ellis; and he warmed to Arthur Sidgwick, a gifted if not learned scholar, who was an enthusiast for Greek and a convinced Liberal. At a boating party given by the Sidgwicks he met the formidable Mrs. Howard, later Rosalind, Countess of Carlisle. "I hear you are a teetotaler, Mr. Murray," said she. "Yes," he replied, "do you disapprove?" Perhaps Murray hoped the alarming lady did disapprove, but if so, he was disappointed, for she was President of the Temperance Union. Being by birth a Stanley of Alderley, she came from a family whose men had been drunkards and whose women had been temperance addicts since the eighteenth century. At Castle Howard she had all the priceless port

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poured into the moat. The villagers were drunk for months afterward. Not surprisingly, her husband and son both showed a propensity for drink. "Don't touch that stuff," she called out across the table when she saw the Earl helping himself to trifle at a tenants' lunch, "it might bring on the old craving." Many more stories of her are found in the memoir of her by her daughter, Lady Henley. In consequence of this meeting Murray was invited to Castle Howard, where he met the Countess's ardent and beautiful daughter, Lady Mary Howard. At that time, Lady Mary must have been a fascinating creature; the distressing likeness to her mother which was later to overtake her was not yet apparent. She spoke French and Italian; she was a passionate supporter of all liberal causes; and she and Murray fell immediately in love.

In 1889, at the astonishingly early age of twenty-three, Murray was appointed to succeed the famous scholar Sir Richard Jebb in the Chair of Greek at Glasgow University. His salary there, together with Lady Mary's private means, enabled them to marry. "He is devoted to the study of literature," wrote Henry Nettleship, Corpus Professor of Latin, in a testimonial supporting Murray's candidacy, "but if I am not mistaken this devotion is the expression not merely of his taste and pleasure in reading but of his whole moral nature. Classical education in his hands will not be a mere engine of literary culture, but a general training of the character and affections." This expectation was fully justified by Murray's tenure of the Chair. He proved an inspiring lecturer and teacher who attracted large audiences, had a powerful effect on them, and who devoted himself to his pupils with striking results. "I combined—or tried to combine," he wrote later, "an enthusiasm for poetry and Greek scholarship with an almost equal enthusiasm for radical politics and social reform." He threw himself into the unpopular cause of opposition to the Boer War, and was regarded by conservative persons as a dangerous radical.

At the same time Murray was actively laying the foundations of a distinguished career in scholarship, he was also planning a second career as a man of letters. In 1894 he wrote to Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, the most eminent Hellenist of his time, to consult him about a plan for a new series of Greek texts and a lexicon to Murray's favorite author, Euripides; he wrote in excellent Greek, and the great man responded warmly and in detail. Wilamowitz was at that time forty-six years old. He was a man of phenomenal energy and of the greatest learning in almost every department of Greek studies; but he was also intensely alive and wholly free from pedantry. Coming from an East Prussian Junker background, he was utterly remote from and never wholly belonged to the academic world; from the start he showed no patience with the dry and pedantic phase through which German

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scholarship was passing when he started his career. Wilamowitz was eager to make Greece intelligible not only to scholars but to the general reader, and he brought out a series of verse translations of Greek tragedies, which for some time enjoyed a great success. His poetic manner owes something to Schiller, but recalls primarily the verse of Richard Wagner; the versions are not now highly regarded, but they have clarity and vigor, and for some time held the stage.

From the start of his career Wilamowitz did important work on the writings of Euripides, a writer not highly esteemed by the German classicists of the early part of the nineteenth century. In the year in which Murray went to Glasgow, Wilamowitz had made Euripides' *Heracles* the subject of the first modern commentary on a Greek text, using all the methods and results of modern scholarship to explain the play and doing so with incomparable clarity and liveliness. Years afterward, in a lecture given at Oxford, Wilamowitz was to say that to make the ancients speak to us we must feed them, like Odysseus in the underworld, upon blood, and that it is our own blood that we must give them. But a scholar who does this runs the risk of fathering upon the ancients beliefs and attitudes rooted wholly in the modern world, and even Wilamowitz was no exception. In 1891, two months after the premiere of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, Wilamowitz wrote this of Phaedra in his commentary on Euripides' *Hippolytus*: "No vulgar woman—she is altogether the high society lady, knows and does her duty; she has a husband and children, relations and a social position, and knows how to render all these the regard she owes them. But she has no inner relationship to husband or children, let alone to any other object. Her life lacks the blessing of work, and she is too intelligent to be content with idleness and empty social activity. . . . So she is ripe for passion. Suddenly she encounters in her stepson a being who astonishes her just because she cannot understand him." It is easy now to see that this description is far more relevant to Ibsenian heroines like Nora, Rebecca West, or Hedda Gabler than to Phaedra; Euripides took no interest in Phaedra's disposition or her social situation, only in her passion. Murray was eager to follow Wilamowitz in combining real learning with an active understanding of the ancient world that would help him to interpret it to his contemporaries, but in doing so he ran the risk of importing into his picture of antiquity more of modernity than the facts justified.

In 1897 Murray brought out a book called *A History of Ancient Greek Literature*. "To read and reread," it begins, "the scanty remains now left to us of the literature of Ancient Greece is a pleasant and not a laborious task"; against these words Henry Jackson, later Professor of Greek at Cambridge, scrawled in the margin, "Insolent puppy!" But though the

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book is not learned, it is fresh, stimulating, and inspiring. During his time at Glasgow, Murray was already engaged upon what was to prove his main work of technical scholarship, the Oxford text of Euripides whose three volumes appeared in 1901, 1904, and 1910. He lacked the sound training which study in Germany would have given him, and in some ways never quite made up that deficiency; but his wide knowledge and his strong feeling for Greek stood him in good stead. In many places he remains correct despite his critics, and his edition is only now in the process of becoming superseded. He was a subtle and ingenious textual critic; indeed, his main fault lay in an excess of these qualities, fostered by the disastrous influence of the clever but sophistic Cambridge scholar, A. W. Verrall.

In 1895 Murray made friends with the dramatist and pioneer translator of Ibsen, William Archer, who became his adviser about things connected with the theater. Murray's prose play attacking imperialism, *Carlyon Sahib*, was produced by Mrs. Patrick Campbell in 1899, but proved a flop; a drama called *Andromache*, produced in 1901 with Janet Achurch in the title role, was hardly more successful. But in 1902 Murray brought out a book on Euripides that contained versions of the *Bacchae* and *Hippolytus*; and two years later the famous management of Granville-Barker and Vedrenne at the Court Theatre opened with Murray's *Hippolytus*. It proved a success, and Granville-Barker went on to stage Murray's *Trojan Women* and *Medea* before he and Vedrenne left the Court in 1907. Murray's versions continued to be successful, notably when Max Reinhardt staged his *Oedipus Tyrannus* at Covent Garden Opera House in 1922.

In the end Murray's health proved unequal to the strains that he imposed on it at Glasgow, and in 1899 he was compelled to resign his Chair and move to Churt, in Surrey, where he and his wife and family—the Murrays had five children—spent three restful years. In 1905 he was sufficiently recovered to return to Oxford as a Fellow of New College, where, though he was not a tutor, he taught as well as wrote. In 1907 he published *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, a work based on lectures given during his first visit to Harvard. Murray's purpose was to mediate between unitarian and analyst theories of the composition of the Homeric poems by postulating an original work gradually augmented by later accretions, a theory that he supported by the analogy of other "ancient traditional books," particularly those of the Old Testament. The book belongs to a past phase of Homeric scholarship; but it is beautifully written and filled with many interesting remarks; the first chapter contains an exposition of Murray's view of Hellenism as an instrument for the betterment of humanity, which is impressive even for those who have no sympathy with his conception.

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In 1908 the Regius Chair of Greek was vacated by the resignation of Ingram Bywater, and the appointment rested with the then prime minister, Herbert Asquith. Murray was not the only possibility, for, as he himself acknowledged, John Burnet, the eminent authority on Greek philosophy, was a strong candidate; but Asquith was eager to choose the person most likely to evoke interest and enthusiasm from his audiences, and this, rather than Murray's Liberalism, was the decisive factor in his choice. I have heard people who were undergraduates at the time describe the immense difference which this appointment to the Chair made to the whole character of classical teaching in the place. Murray's success as a lecturer was legendary, aided by his mellifluous voice and strong dramatic sense. In 1910 he voted for the abolition of Greek as a compulsory course of study; he thought that Greek was capable of looking after itself without compulsion, and so far it has done so. In 1912 he brought out the first edition of what is in many ways his most important book: it was originally called *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, the fifth stage being added in the second edition of 1925.

The classical colleagues who had most influence on Murray lived not in Oxford but in Cambridge. I have already mentioned what Housman called "the baleful influence" of A. W. Verrall. Jane Harrison started as an archaeologist and had a wide knowledge of Greek art. Later she read Durkheim and other anthropologists and became a pioneer of the anthropological approach to early Greek religion. Unlike her fellow pioneers in Cambridge, Sir James Frazer and A. B. Cook, she did not know Greek well; her judgment was erratic, and like other pioneers she made many errors. But she did much to expedite the adoption of new methods that finally led to valuable results, and her charm and enthusiasm had a powerful effect upon her friends and pupils. Murray also was a pioneer of the new approach, and in this capacity did important services to learning; yet his study of anthropology led him into grave mistakes. What interested him about what he termed "the dark and fascinating department of the human mind which we may call religious origins" was its appeal to the imagination. Thus he came to fasten on the notion that early Greek religion centered upon the Year-Daemon, the vegetation spirit who is annually born, killed, buried with the crop, and resurrected. This led him to espouse a theory of the origins of tragedy, which in his own time was effectively refuted and for which few scholars now say a good word.

Jane Harrison in her enthusiasm for the new discoveries treated the Olympian religion of Greece with scant respect. Murray, too, was critical of the attribution of human passions to the gods, and could not refrain from transferring to the Olympian religion some of the aversion that he felt for orthodox Christianity. Yet he felt it his duty to defend that

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religion against Miss Harrison, seeing that it stood for cosmic order and rationality. One application of that belief was his suggestion that we find in the Homeric poems a definite tendency to ignore certain topics which were thought unsuitable to the epic style, a suggestion that has since been taken up by others. Yet Murray failed to perceive the merits of the Olympian religion as they were perceived by his German contemporary Walter F. Otto: he failed to appreciate its insistence that the gods governed the universe for themselves and not for men; its reminder that the human condition imposed limitations that no action on the part of men could overcome; its teaching that human life was for the most part miserable but might by the favor of the gods and the supreme efforts of men themselves contain moments of felicity. Murray was most at home with the religious philosophies evolved during the fourth century, those which supplied a fifth stage when placed in the middle of his original *Four Stages of Greek Religion* in 1925. These beliefs again figured in the small but interesting book called *Stoic, Christian and Humanist*, which he brought out in 1940. He wrote with deep sympathy of Epicureanism and even of Cynicism, but his obvious affinity was with Stoicism, perhaps because of a residue of a kind of Scottish Calvinism. "The Stoic school," he wrote, ". . . has on the whole weathered the storms of life with great success. It largely dominated later antiquity by its imaginative and emotional power. It gave form to the aspirations of early Christianity. It lasts now as the nearest approach to an acceptable system of conduct for those who do not accept revelation, but still keep some faith in the 'Purpose of Things.' " One can easily see the Stoic residue in the Neoplatonic paganism of late antiquity, of which Murray gives such a sympathetic sketch in the last stage of his *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, built around the treatise of the fifth-century writer Sallustius, "On the Gods and the World." *Five Stages of Greek Religion* is a fine book; Murray shows remarkable familiarity with the great body of detailed work done upon the subject and fully acknowledges his debt to it, but his interpretation of the results that it attained is quite his own and is expressed with clarity and elegance.

In 1913 Murray published in the popular and influential Home University Library, of which he and his friend H. A. L. Fisher were general editors, a small but important book called *Euripides and His Age*. This book, which I shall deal with presently, summed up the general view of Euripides on which Murray's translations rested.

The First World War marked a turning point in Murray's life and thought. He had earlier opposed the South African War with all his power; but this time he had no doubt of the justice of the British cause, which he most effectively served by pamphleteering, lecturing abroad, and undertaking other governmental work. At this time he began his

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practical efforts to help the victims of war and persecution, the number of which grew steadily and reached its climax during the period of Hitler's rule. After the First World War, Murray threw himself into work in support of the League of Nations, acting from 1923 to 1938 as chairman of the League of Nations Union and presiding for eight years over the League's International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation, a distinguished body that was a precursor of UNESCO. Unlike many other enthusiastic supporters of the League, Murray was never an unconditional pacifist—he opposed appeasement of Hitler in the thirties—and he was never unduly optimistic about the League's prospects of success, being too much a Hellenist to be oversanguine about the capacity of human beings. But he saw in the League the only serious attempt to prevent a recurrence of world war, and believed that as such it deserved all possible support. Nor was the League the only cause he fought for; at a time when such support was badly needed, he gave ungrudging support to women's rights and women's education. The time given up to this work represented a very great sacrifice, but Murray had far too strong a sense of civic duty to be able to concentrate, in such an age as that in which he lived, on his scholarship alone. To him the work to spread the knowledge of Hellenism and the work to preserve peace were one and the same.

After the war, Sybil Thorndike acted in a series of performances of Murray's *Trojan Women*, *Medea*, and *Hippolytus*, and these works continued to be staged at home and abroad, though with diminishing success, into the thirties. Even after the Second World War there were occasional revivals, and Murray's accomplished rendering of the newly-discovered play of Menander, whose title he translated as *The Rape of the Locks*, was put on with some success by amateur companies.

But in 1920 the translations were fiercely attacked by a thirty-two-year-old poet and critic whom the public thought of, when it thought of him at all, as a disreputably modern writer. "Greek tragedy," T. S. Eliot wrote, "will never have the slightest vitalising effect upon English poetry if it can only appear masquerading as a vulgar debasement of the eminently personal idiom of Swinburne." Euripides writes, Eliot complains, "Women of Corinth, I have come out of the house"; Murray writes: "Women of Corinth, I am come to show / My face. . . ." " 'Show my face,' therefore," Eliot says, "is Mr. Murray's gift." Again, in a speech by Medea, Euripides writes: "This thing has fallen on me and has ruined my life; I have let go my delight in life and long for death." Murray says:

> This thing undreamed of sudden from on high
> Hath sapped my soul: I dazzle where I stand,
> The cup of life all shattered in my hand.

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"So here are two striking phrases which we owe to Mr. Murray," Eliot writes; "it is he who has sapped our soul and shattered the cup of all life for Euripides." Murray, Eliot continues, "has simply interposed between Euripides and ourselves a barrier more impenetrable than the Greek language." As a poet, Eliot declares, Murray "is merely a very insignificant follower of the pre-Raphaelite movement."

In the examples chosen by Eliot, the spareness and tautness of the Greek original have been replaced by faded and tawdry ornament of a kind typical of verse; the style derives ultimately from Swinburne, as its rhyming meters, alliteration, and countless tricks of style reveal. In Swinburne romanticism is already decaying, but this verse belongs to the category of faded sub-Swinburnian verse of the nineties, typified by the now deservedly forgotten dramatist Stephen Phillips. The verse of Greek tragedy is by no means all spare and taut. Much of it is highly elaborate and ornate, but the ornament is of a very different kind from that found in the verse of Swinburne who, despite Murray's reluctance to admit it (he always maintained that he was far more influenced by the verse of his mother's first cousin W. S. Gilbert, to whom he owed his name), was surely Murray's principal model. Part of Murray's ornament consisted in the fatal use of rhyme, employed by him in the hope of lending to his verse a solemnity comparable with that of the original. But the rhyme leads to the interpolation of alien matter and to much distortion of the sense, and frequently results in a displeasing jingle. Let me illustrate with an example from Murray's translation of a passage from the second stasimon of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus.

> And how shall I call the thing that came
> At the first hour to Ilion city?
> Call it a dream of peace untold,
> A secret joy in a mist of gold,
> A woman's eye that was soft, like flame,
> A flower which ate a man's heart with pity.
> But she swerved aside, and wrought to her kiss a bitter ending,
> And a wrath was on her harbouring, a wrath upon her friending,
> When to Priam and his sons she fled quickly o'er the deep
> With the god to whom she sinned for her watcher on the wind,
> A death-bride, for whom brides long shall weep.

Louis MacNeice, using blank verse instead of rhyme in his version of 1936, offers a rendering which, whatever one may think of it as poetry, is a great deal closer to the actual Greek:

> So I would say there came
> To the city of Troy
> A notion of windless calm

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Delicate adornment of riches
Soft shooting of the eyes and flower
Of desire that stings the fancy,
But swerving aside she achieved

A bitter end to her marriage,
Ill guest and ill companion,
Hurled upon Priam's sons, convoyed
By Zeus, patron of host and guest,
Dark angel dowered with tears.

Taste in poetry shifts from generation to generation—pre-Raphaelitism is again in fashion—and some of my readers may well prefer Murray's version to that of MacNeice. That would give me pleasure, since I was personally devoted to Murray, but I cannot pretend for a moment that I prefer his rendering as poetry, and I have no doubt whatever that it is far closer to the words of Aeschylus. The truth is that, as I shall argue presently, Murray's pervading romanticism led him to distort the content in a way even more damaging to the truthfulness of his rendering than the distortion of the form resulting from the nature of his style. Yet at his best, seen most often in his renderings of certain choruses of Aristophanes, Murray was a highly skillful writer of Swinburnian verse, and from his translations, once we have decided to regard them as a period piece and have ceased to expect them to render anything like the full impact of a Greek tragedy, we can legitimately get pleasure of a certain order. Consider, for example, this rendering by Murray of the opening stanza of the second stasimon of Euripides' *Trojan Women*:

In Salamis, filled with the foaming
  Of billows and murmur of bees,
Old Telamon stayed from his roaming
  Long ago, on a throne of the seas;
Looking out on the hills olive-laden,
  Enchanted, where first from the earth
The grey-gleaming fruit of the Maiden,
  Athena had birth;
A soft grey crown for a city
  Beloved, a city of light:
Yet he rested not there, nor had pity,
  But went forth in his might,
Where Heracles wandered, the lonely
  Bow-bearer, and lent him his hands
For the wrecking of one land only,
  Of Ilion, Ilion only,
Most hated of lands!

That is not much closer to its original than the translation of

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Aeschylus just quoted; but though its tone and impact are distinctly different from those of Euripides, it is not without poetic merit.

As I said earlier, Murray's distortion of the style of Greek tragedy went together with a distortion of the meaning. His master, the great Wilamowitz, had given the world an Ibsenian Euripides; Murray's Euripides was Shavian. From about 1899, he had been a close friend of Shaw; and Shaw's *Major Barbara*, produced in 1905, contains easily recognizable and highly entertaining portraits of Murray himself (Professor Adolphus Cusins), his wife (Barbara), and his formidable mother-in-law (Lady Britomart). The play ends with the idealistic Greek scholar taking over the armaments business founded by Andrew Undershaft; Shaw understood the underlying determination of Murray's character and knew that Murray would not flinch from positive action in order to achieve his idealistic aims. In the film based on *Major Barbara*, Murray was portrayed by Mr. Rex Harrison, a fine actor but one who does not correspond very closely with my impression of Murray.

Observing that Euripides, in his dramas, often makes play with the philosophical and cosmological speculations of the contemporary sophists, Murray concluded that he must have been concerned to propagate belief in these ideas. From the many examples of debates in which one character puts forward his point of view with all the resources of contemporary rhetoric and another character then states the opposite one, Murray deduced that Euripides was arguing the case for new and revolutionary moral attitudes. In both these assumptions, he was guided by the apparent analogy with Ibsen. Some of Euripides' plays contained passionate pleas for women; Murray therefore assumed the poet to have been a committed feminist, taking no account of the context of these pleas within the plays in question. One chorus of the *Medea* in his version was chanted by a horde of suffragettes. In Euripides' play, *Ion*, Creusa, Queen of Athens, for a short time believes Apollo to have allowed her son by him to perish and, in a superb monody in lyric anapests, delivers a passionate diatribe against the god. Murray seizes upon this as a denunciation of mythological deities who feel human passions and treat mortal women as their playthings; but Creusa happens to be mistaken, as she learns not long afterward, and since her son is restored to her and becomes her only heir, at the end of the play she has good reason to be grateful to Apollo. *Trojan Women* powerfully depicts the horrors of war, and Murray assumes that Euripides meant it as a protest against atrocities his own side committed in the war against Sparta and her allies that Athens was fighting at the time. This view still has some advocates, although those who are aware of the difference between a tragedy and a *drame engagé* see the play not as a protest against the behavior of any actual persons, but as a portrayal of what the

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poet regards as a permanent feature of the human situation. This view of Euripides as a crusader for contemporary causes is eloquently expressed in Murray's book *Euripides and His Age*, published in 1913. The work is delightfully written and (if you will forgive a personal reminiscence) did more than any other to make me want to become a scholar when I read it at the age of fourteen. I now believe it to be almost totally misguided.

In the early part of his career Murray did not much care for Old Comedy; it was full of obscenity, and he was a trifle straitlaced; it was robust, and Murray's taste had been formed during the eighties and nineties when that quality was not in fashion. But Aristophanes constantly attacked the politicians who kept the war going, and his heroes triumphed by restoring peace so that they could indulge the most pervasive human fantasies. It was therefore possible to represent Aristophanes as an enlightened pacifist writing in a popular form in the hope of curing the bellicosity of his audience, and in this good cause making certain concessions to the groundlings' taste. Murray drew confirmation for this view from the beauty and delicacy of many of Aristophanes' lyrics, which inspired Murray to some of his most successful versions. But for an understanding of the full-bodied humor of Aristophanes and his sympathetic and satiric view of the human condition, you must not look to Murray. His limitations as a critic of both tragedy and comedy are clearly revealed by his inability to appreciate Shakespeare, in whom an explicit moral message is not easily to be apprehended.

The strong measure of suppressed Calvinism that lay behind Murray's lifelong agnosticism may plainly be perceived in his treatment of Aeschylus. "The Olympian religion," Murray wrote, "brought to man the Good News that, as Plutarch expresses it, 'the world is not ruled by fabulous Typhons and Giants'—nor, we may add, by blind mechanical laws—'but by One who is a wise father to all.' " "The Aeschylean doctrine," he added, "is in essence an early and less elaborate stage of the theological system which we associate with Saint Paul: the suppression of the Law by a personal relation to the divine person, and a consequent disregard for the crude coarse test of a man's 'works' or 'deeds' in comparison with the one unfailing test of the spirit, its 'faith' or 'faithfulness' towards God." The stern assertion of the chorus of the *Agamemnon* that Zeus has given mortals a grace that comes by violence in that he has ordained that their crimes against each other must eventually be punished, however, is a long way from Christian notions of sin and repentance. Orestes is acquitted, not because of his faith, but because the reasons for his condemnation and the reasons for his acquittal cancel each other out, and the gods decide to give him the benefit of the doubt. Aeschylus and Saint Paul are worlds apart.

After the First World War Murray devoted much of his time to work

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designed to preserve peace; one vice-chancellor of Oxford even asked him if he should not resign his Chair. But if he had wished to do so, his colleagues, not to mention his audiences, would have done everything they could to stop him. In 1925 he brought out the augmented second edition of his *Five Stages of Greek Religion.* Two years later he gave his Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard, which were published under the title *The Classical Tradition in Poetry.* This is not among his best books; in particular, the perverse ingenuity of the equation of Hamlet and Orestes with the Corn Spirit has provoked adverse criticism. His *Aristophanes: A Survey* of 1933 and *Aeschylus: The Creator of Tragedy* of 1940 are beautifully written, but are not among his best works; the first Oxford text of Aeschylus, which appeared in 1937, has little that is new and good to set against its marked perversity and eccentricity.

Murray's achievement as a scholar is by any standards considerable. His text of Euripides is only now being superseded; and anyone who doubts his capacity for pure scholarship ought to read through his often brilliant contributions to the early publications of Oxyrhynchus papyri by his Oxford colleagues, B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt. *The Rise of the Greek Epic* and, still more, the *Five Stages of Greek Religion* are works whose value cannot be ignored. Yet, considering Murray's extraordinary flair for Greek, one cannot help feeling sad that he did not achieve more in scholarship. This failing was partly because he felt it his duty to devote much of his time to public work; but it happened also because his minor but real gift for poetry got in the way of his approach to Greek realities. He had a weakness for what he called originality, and sometimes he seemed to care more for originality than for truth; he was fascinated by the irresponsible conjectures of Verrall and the ingenious fantasies of the learned Arabist D. S. Margoliouth. A. E. Housman, who was seven years Murray's senior, liked him but disapproved of his activities.

Housman clearly understood that the spirit of classical poetry and that of the romantic poetry of his own age were totally different; in his Cambridge inaugural lecture, he spoke disdainfully of "the prevalent opinion that the secret of the classical spirit is open to anyone who has a fervent admiration for the second-best parts of Tennyson." Housman kept his own romantic poetry quite distinct from his classical scholarship. People think his poetry was a refuge from the austere world of his scholarship. On the contrary, his work opened to him a world in which he was able to enjoy witty, elegant writers such as Ovid and Manilius, free from the tyranny of romantic taste and romantic pessimism that oppressed his poetry. Had he been able to use his vein of poetry to make his scholarship less dry, or his appreciation of classical poetry to make his romantic poetry less limited in scope, he might have achieved even

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more. Murray, on the other hand, failed to perceive the incongruity between his poetry and his scholarship. This caused his translations to be false to the character of the originals they purported to render; but it enabled him to breathe life into his teaching and his written scholarship. Housman's own contribution to technical scholarship was immeasurably greater; he too was a minor poet, but a better one than Murray. Whatever Murray's failings, his influence upon others was powerful; among the countless pupils and readers whom he influenced were eminent professional scholars such as A. D. Nock and E. R. Dodds.

In the end, Murray's tenure of the Oxford Chair was specially prolonged for five years until he retired in 1936. He lived on at Yatscombe, the pleasant house on Boars Hill where he had moved from Woodstock Road in 1919, retaining his faculties to an astonishing degree, until his death at the age of ninety-one on May 20, 1957. He received many honors, including the Order of Merit, conferred on him at Churchill's recommendation on his seventy-fifth birthday in 1941, the German order *Pour le Mérite*, and, in the end, burial in Westminster Abbey.

The Murrays' household was unusual. At their table, cabinet ministers, famous authors, eminent scholars, and raw undergraduates might sit together eating nut cutlets and sipping orangeade. Most visitors were, to some extent, cowed by the dominant personality of the hostess. At the time of her marriage in 1889, Lady Mary Murray must have been very like one of Shelley's heroines. In old age she retained her generous enthusiasms, but though she was basically kindhearted, she had inherited a large measure of her mother's bossiness, censoriousness, and complete lack of a sense of humor. Maurice Bowra described how she ordered one of the refugees to whom she was so kind to repeat a story he had told, then suddenly noticed that it was boring and cut him short with, "That will do. Now finish up your pudding!" The first time I had lunch with the Murrays, they had given up their earlier vegetarianism; one of them had had to have a blood transfusion, and they felt that after that it would be hypocritical to refuse meat. There was chicken for lunch, and their son Stephen carved. When he very naturally served his mother first, she fixed him with a stare and said, "I always used to help a guest first, however young." In a domestic atmosphere strongly colored by the powerful personality of his wife, Murray held his own with charm, wit, and unfailing good humor. Once Lady Mary rapped the table with a spoon and announced that everyone at the luncheon table was to tell the worst thing he or she had ever done. She herself began and explained that as a small girl at Castle Howard she had once stolen green plums—something she never could resist—from the church where they had been offered at a harvest festival. "But I like to think it was all right," she said, "because next Sunday I put a shilling, all the money I had, in

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the collection-box." "My dear," said her husband from the other end of the table, "the last time you told that story it was sixpence."

Murray was an extremely entertaining talker and, like Addison, he spoke without the aid of alcohol or obscenity. A man at a party once took him for a waiter and said, "Call me a cab." "You're a growler," said Murray. "You can't talk to me like that, my man." "Well, at any rate you're not a hansom." One day I was with him just after having gone to Cambridge to read a paper about the textual criticism of an Aeschylean chorus. My audience had included the late A. Y. Campbell, once Professor of Greek at Liverpool, a most agreeable person but a notoriously wild emender. During the discussion after I had read my paper, Campbell was on his best behavior, but suddenly he suggested dealing with a problem by transposing a whole stanza of the chorus. I pointed out that this would disturb the pattern of metrical responsion between the strophe and the following antistrophe. Campbell retracted his suggestion, but during dinner that night he telephoned me with a new emendation of the passage, and when I got home next day I found waiting for me a letter from him putting forward yet a third. When I told Murray this, he was reminded of a weekend party at which the chief lion had been the celebrated Mme Blavatsky. On the first day she asked one of the company to go into the village and buy a quantity of gauze; and during the first séance, this gauze became entangled with one of the audience. Mme Blavatsky at once gave an explanation that was totally convincing, or at least would have been had she not given at breakfast next day another explanation that was equally convincing but different, and had not each of the guests, on his return home, found a letter from her giving a third explanation, in itself equally persuasive.

As for my own relations with Gilbert Murray, at school I read his writings with passionate enthusiasm; no other modern books did as much to make me want to be a scholar. Then, with the excessiveness of youth, I reacted against them. I am a Conservative, with very little belief in the intrinsic goodness of human nature; I came to think that Murray brought too much of the modern world into his interpretation of antiquity. Like many young scholars, I went through a tiresomely protracted phase of aggressive dryness. After I won the Ireland Scholarship in December 1947, I was asked up to Yatscombe for lunch and met Murray for the first time. Lady Mary was extremely nice to me, even though she discovered that I was a Conservative. In spite of the obvious incompatibility between her and me, I found the experience exciting; but there were a good many people there, and I did not have any especially memorable contact with Murray himself. The next year I was appointed to a post at Cambridge and saw nothing of him for about seven years, except for occasional encounters on trains going to London. Then

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after my return to Oxford, my former tutor, R. H. Dundas, took me up to tea at Yatscombe. This time Murray must have mentioned me to his old friend Paul Maas, the famous German scholar who had come to Oxford as a refugee and was working for the Clarendon Press. Murray had become aware of the deficiencies of his 1937 text of Aeschylus and had carefully revised it, with the aid of Maas, before publishing the second edition in 1955. In 1957 the press had just told him that the book was almost sold out, and that he could, if he wished, make further changes. I already knew Maas well, and often went to see him; and now I was invited to join the two in the revision of the Oxford Aeschylus. For about four months Maas and I traveled up to Boars Hill about four times a week, and the three of us went through the whole of Aeschylus together. It was a delightful experience. Maas was a scholar as different from Murray as anyone could imagine: both extremely learned and extremely exact, he aimed at giving to his scholarly work the conciseness and preciseness of a mathematical demonstration. In Germany he had been a rich man. Deprived of everything by the Hitlerian persecution, he accepted his ill fortune in the spirit of a man who knew that human beings can count on nothing, and was content to live on a minimal stipend provided he could do his work. He had been a friend of Murray for nearly half a century. In 1909 Maas, in Switzerland for winter sports, had noticed a well-brought-up English girl, accompanied by a nanny carrying her Liddell and Scott, and had introduced himself as a professor of Greek. "My father, too, is a professor of Greek," replied the girl, "and when you come to Oxford you must come and stay with us." The girl was Murray's daughter Rosalind, and very soon after, Maas did come and stay with the Murrays at Woodstock Road.

No two men were more different, and no two men were better friends. Most people treated Murray with great deference; Maas, if he disagreed, said so straight out, and Murray was delighted. To hear these two famous men talk together, and to go through Aeschylus with them, was an exhilarating experience. By this time Murray had almost entirely given up his public life, but he still knew very large parts of Greek poetry by heart, and to hear him recite it in his melodious voice was an exciting experience. He remained an incomparable talker, and his memory for the early part of his life was unimpaired. Once he made a speech at a United Nations function, and he continued to write an occasional letter to the *Times*. Unlike other elderly Liberals I knew at that time, whose inability to see how times had changed made them gullible victims of collectivist cant, Murray perfectly understood the altered situation and regretted the decline of European influence upon the world. The disadvantages often held to excuse any behavior on the part of those belonging to the so-called working class and the so-called

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Third World did not in his view palliate the barbarism often shown by both, and he was ready to call it by its proper name. In taking up this attitude he was entirely true to the liberal principles—aristocratic liberal principles, as Arnold Toynbee said—for which he had fought all his life, and he maintained them with his usual courage.

Murray's life, which had begun with singular felicity, was clouded by much sadness. He survived three of his children: his son Denis, his beautiful and tragic daughter Agnes, his gifted but erratic son Basil, said to have been the model for Evelyn Waugh's memorable character Basil Seale. Though he was an eminent public figure and a distinguished scholar, he was never exempt from criticism. He lived between the academic world and the great world, and was never quite at home in either. At all times it was possible for second-rate scholars to despise him as "unsound"; like most scholars who give their own lifeblood to the ghosts, he seemed to many to have taken too much of the modern world into his picture of antiquity. Taste in poetry changed, and his famous translations became the object of attack. The liberal values for which he had fought all his life were challenged everywhere. The influence of Europe and European culture declined; individualism was everywhere challenged by collectivism; the ignorant, invested with power at the demand of liberals in the name of justice, used that power to oppress civilized people and discourage civilized behavior. But Gilbert Murray never became embittered and never wavered in his loyalty to what he believed.

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About Marc Bloch

EUGEN WEBER

On March 8, 1944, at place du Pont in Lyon, the Germans arrested an aging gentleman, rather short, gray-haired, bespectacled, neatly dressed, holding a briefcase in one hand and a cane in the other, whose papers identified him as Maurice Blanchard. The following day, the Gestapo raided the dressmaker's shop, on the rue des Quatre Chapeaux, where Blanchard rented a room. One of the women who worked there had apparently denounced him. The officers found a radio set and enough papers to suggest they had gotten an interesting prize. For several weeks Blanchard was beaten, tortured, subjected among other trials to the humiliating and suffocating torments of the cold bathtub, and brought back unconscious to Montluc prison, his wrist and his ribs broken. Sent to the hospital with bronchopneumonia, he recovered and was returned to prison.

A few months later, on June 16, with the Germans beginning preparations to clear out and eager to liquidate their holdings, the little man and twenty-six others were loaded into a truck, which drove up the Saône toward Trévoux—a road, the Nationale 433, more familiar today to those seeking out the restaurant of Paul Bocuse at Collonges. A young man in the truck was crying and Blanchard reassured him: "They're going to shoot us—don't be afraid, it doesn't hurt. It will happen fast."

A bit past Trévoux, at a place called Les Roussilles, a little short of Saint Didier-de-Formans, the prisoners were unloaded and shot in groups of four at the edge of a field. Incredibly, one of the twenty-seven survived both the shooting and the coup de grace and managed to crawl to safety during the night to tell of their last moments. So the twenty-six bodies were found and identified on June 26; among them was Maurice Blanchard, delegate of *Franc-Tireur* to the regional directorate of the united resistance movements (MUR) and editor of a major underground publication, the *Cahiers politiques*, whose real name was Marc Bloch, one of the great historians of our age ("the greatest historian of modern times," according to J. H. Plumb). Writing to Fernand Braudel in a German prisoner-of-war camp to announce the death, Lucien Febvre provided a characteristic epitome: "The loss of Marc Bloch is irreparable. All this end of his life has been magnificent." He had succeeded in acting out his aspirations, not only as a scholar, but as a citizen and as a man—a success that is not given to many of us.

Marc Bloch, who was born in Lyon in July 1886, was fifty-seven years old when he died. His father, Gustave, was professor of ancient history there, but he soon moved to Paris, to the Ecole Normale Supérieure and the Sorbonne. That was where Marc grew up—between his parents' apartment on the avenue d'Orleans (now avenue du Maréchal Leclerc) and the *quartier des écoles* where he attended first the lycée Louis-le-Grand, then the Ecole Normale Supérieure where he studied (including a year's military service) from 1904 to 1908. The Left Bank would be his home for all his Paris life, and his attachment to it would be reflected in the choice of his noms de guerre in the Resistance: first *Arpajon* from the little train that, until 1936, clattered along the boulevard Saint-Michel to the Halles; then *Chevreuse*, sticking to the Ligne de Sceaux; and only finally shifting to *Narbonne* when the other two names had been found out and rendered useless.

EUGEN WEBER is professor of history and dean of the College of Letters and Science at the University of California–Los Angeles. He is the author of, among other books, *Action Française* and, most recently, *Peasants into Frenchmen*.

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In 1908 Bloch passed his *agrégation* examination in history and geography and went off for a year to German universities, then dominant in medieval history, followed by the plum of a three-year fellowship at the Fondation Thiers. Then came his first teaching posts, in provincial lycées: Montpellier, 1912–13; Amiens, 1913–14. He started to publish, to plan his doctorate, and to establish his long-standing relationship with England. Then came the war: the moment when, as Lady Sackville put it at the time, "Ce sale Kaiser, voilà qu'il a upset le milk."

For Bloch, as for many of his generation, the war came as an exciting development. He was exhilarated by the national mood and shared in it. Back in the army from the first days of war, he thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Apart from two months in a hospital, three months' sick leave, and fifteen days at base camp, he continued on active service, nearly always in the infantry, from August 2, 1914, to March 13, 1919, and left the army with four citations, the Légion d'honneur, and the Croix de Guerre.

When the war broke out, Marc Bloch was no callow youth: twenty-eight years old, he was a grown man, well embarked on his career. It is important that he enjoyed what he later described as "four years of fighting idleness," and his peculiar historian's eye sharpened his appreciation. As he recalled about the heavy fighting on September 10, 1914, "My curiosity, which seldom abandons me, had not left me." So he observed the differences in the colors of the smoke associated with different shells (the time shells are ocher, the percussions black), he remembered passages from Tolstoy, and he noted small details: the potatoes rolling out of the kit bag of a dead sergeant major, the extraordinary weight of corpses. But one major consideration overshadowed all others, and it would be made clear on the day in 1915 when, convalescing from that typical trench disease, typhoid fever, he began to write his *Souvenirs de guerre: "I had the honor* [my italics] to take part in the first five months of the 1914–15 campaign."

It is not surprising that an intelligent and able man, professionally confined to paperwork and talk, should welcome the opportunity to test himself in action. But Bloch, like many of his generation (at least at that time), had a strong sense of personal honor—a factor that runs the risk of being lost from sight in a time like ours, which does not always recognize this form of self-respect.

We are talking, of course, about a generation that had grown up with a strong sense of what are nowadays described as "bourgeois" values: honesty, probity, effort, order; and of the civic virtues that went with them—virtues in which Bloch's father, the historian of the Roman republic, strongly believed. We are also talking about the strong patriotism nursed in a family of French-Alsatian Jews who had left Alsace when the Germans occupied it, and for whom the national and the republican commitment were one and the same thing. And we are talking about a man who, under a calm, restrained exterior, nursed strong feelings about right and wrong along with the will to be true to himself. Unless we give due credit to Bloch's sense of honor, we shall understand neither his success in war, nor his return to the army in his fifties, nor his later commitment to the Resistance.

In any case, the little *prof binoclard,* less than five feet five inches tall, did very well as a soldier. In the Battle of the Marne, he learned how to dig trenches; he learned how to supplement his weak eyesight by using his ears; he became a real poilu. Sergeant, then sergeant major, second lieutenant in 1916, he ended the war a captain covered with woundstripes and citations. Meanwhile soldiering, with its built-in idleness, offered opportunities for reading. His pocket diaries contain lists of history books in English and French, sprinkled with other matter: Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass,* Saint Augustine's *Confessions,* Dostoevski's *The Insulted and Injured* (twice). By 1917 there was also a brief work plan for his doctoral thesis. Demobilized in 1919, Bloch took advantage of the special facilities offered to veterans and crossed his last academic hurdle with an abbreviated version of what, in normal circumstances, would have demanded many more pages and many more years. By the end of 1920 he had his doctorate. Meanwhile, since 1919, he had been teaching at the University of Strasbourg, where he would become the titular Professor of Medieval History in 1927.

Thereby, however, hangs a tale. One of Bloch's teachers at the Ecole Normale had been Christian Pfister, the son of modest

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winegrowers from Beblenheim, whose parents had sent him out of Alsace in 1871 to finish his education in Paris at the lycée Louis-le-Grand, where he met and befriended another *interne* called Raymond Poincaré. The two boarders, one from Alsace, one from Lorraine, struck up a friendship that never flagged. In 1919, with Poincaré president of the republic, Pfister was appointed to a chair in the new showcase University of Strasbourg. In 1927, with Poincaré as prime minister, Pfister became rector of the university. Bloch's academic fortunes were not unrelated to those of his patron. Intellectual merit is not always enough by itself—it needs luck, and the right circumstances. Bloch often combined the three, and this is a point to which I shall return. But Pfister, a good, solid medievalist, also contributed to, or reinforced, other aspects of Bloch's mind: he was a burning patriot, he was a model of minuteness and integrity, and he was fascinated by regional history—the first professor in France (at Nancy) to hold such a chair, that of the history of eastern France, from 1886 until he was transferred to the Ecole Normale on the eve of Bloch's arrival there.

This brings me to a point that deserves to be made because, while it does not explain Bloch's career, it helps to illuminate it from the social historian's point of view: Bloch was fortunate, and he was privileged. He was born with an academic silver spoon in his mouth, the son of a great figure in the university (I have heard Bloch described as *fils d'archevêque*). This not only gave him good connections and a good start in a very competitive trade but also the opportunity to acquire an unusually broad cultural background and unusually broad academic relations. He traveled early, and he traveled widely, to a degree quite unusual in a rather restricted and constricted profession. On the eve of war, in 1914, he was on holiday in Switzerland. When the riots of February 1934 threatened the republic, he was lecturing at the London School of Economics and drinking port at Oriel. In March 1939—when he was called up, like other reservists, for the second time in six months—he had to rush back from Cambridge. So, when Bloch advocated comparative history, he did it not only from the point of view, exceptional in his time, of one who had been able to pursue it in the only provincial university in France with a decent library and a more than provincial perspective, but also from the position of someone who had been able to pursue the necessary documents in a wide variety of libraries and collections. Bloch's great paper of 1927, in which he argued for comparative history, was delivered at an international congress in Oslo. In it, drawing a parallel between enclosures in England and Provence, he revealingly added: "Mais ces textes, il faut songer à aller les chercher."

If documents are to be sought out, you not only have to think of going to look for them, you also have to have the means to do it. In a modest way, Marc Bloch always had the means to approach the ends he had the brains to conceive. After his marriage in 1919 he had a level of income and support that most of his colleagues lacked. Simone Vidal was the daughter of a successful engineer, *inspecteur des ponts et chaussées*, and descended from a family of engineers and manufacturers related to the Dreyfuses. She made two crucial contributions to Bloch's life and to his work. Clearly, she made him happy—indeed the couple was so united that their six children (or some of them) sometimes felt they were not really wanted. Simone acted as her husband's secretary, helped in his research, transcribed his manuscripts, and seems to have been his favorite interlocutor. She also made him independently wealthy, which was not entirely an advantage because it seems to have excited the envy of his colleagues, but which gave him elbowroom, a freedom of time and movement that must have been unusual in his profession at that time.

This can help to explain the torrent of writings that the prodigious Bloch poured out, especially through the 1920s and 1930s. Were it not for its quality, the quantity of his output would not be important. But given the quality, quantity becomes highly relevant, especially as a factor of the range and impact of the message that the writings carried. Beginning in 1911, Bloch never ceased to publish reviews, not only of French works, but of books and articles in German, English, Spanish, Italian, Flemish, Latin, of course, and the occasional Scandinavian language. His own first article in English appeared in 1925, in Spanish in 1926, in Italian in 1928. From the beginning—when he reviewed H. G. Wells's

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new history of the world in 1922—but especially in the 1930s, his interests were omnivorous: in space, where he reviewed works on Africa and China and Japan; in time, where ancient slavery or the fabrication of matches in the nineteenth century were grist to his mill; and in disciplines, where he showed serious interest in anthropology and sociology, politics and linguistics, geography and psychology, folklore and museums.

The mere numbers remain impressive. Bloch's bibliography for 1934 shows 121 articles, notes and reviews of works in five languages; that for 1935, eighty-seven. Even in 1943, when he had become active in the Resistance, he published thirty-one reviews, including several of German books. I did a superficial count of the *Annales* for 1934, and found twenty contributions by Bloch in the January number, running from a paragraph to several pages; twenty-seven in March, four in May, fourteen in July, twelve in September, four in November. All this while, presumably, he was finishing off the two volumes of his *Société féodale* (which came out the following year) and keeping up the German historiographical bulletin of the *Revue historique.*

The briefest of Bloch's notes is thoughtful, critical, full of throwaway points: virtue unaccompanied by severe intellectual criticism always risks turning against its dearest aims. If Saint Louis went off to crusade in Tunis, it was probably because he had no atlas. A good, international interlibrary loan system would do more for comparative studies than a lot of wise advice. The Bibliothèque Nationale needs to pull up its socks, get on with the cataloging, keep up serials, use chariots to distribute books to readers (a novelty that would be introduced in the 1970s). Another innovation (still awaited today) would be to stop limiting the number of request bulletins allowed in a single day. (The B.N. was always Bloch's bête noire: "No question about it," he wrote to Febvre, "a few hours of work at the *British* [Museum] inspire the irresistible desire to build in the square Louvois a vast pyre of all the B.N.'s regulations and to burn on it, in a splendid auto-da-fé, Julien Cain [the director], his librarians and his staff . . . also a few malodorous readers, if you like, and no doubt also the architect . . . after which we could work and invite the foreigners to come and work.")

Bloch was, of course, very organized, "*un esprit tres ordonné.*" In a letter to Febvre, after his return from England in 1934, he describes the vices of the parliamentary system that had given way before the riots of February 6, 1934: "a horrible and puerile mixture of flabbiness, false chumminess, bad work habits, and total lack of intelligence." Here was a mirror image of the virtues he respected, which turn out to be his own: strength of character, reserve, work, discipline, and intelligence.

But in considering Marc Bloch's achievements, I am inclined to think that only through a mixture of monomania and unusual facilities could he have achieved so much research and reading, so much thinking and writing, while simultaneously preparing the annual lecture courses against whose demands he never ceased to argue. As a historian he was a man possessed—never without a book in his hand. Even in the Resistance he always carried a book and used it to keep his notes in cipher. He was never without a work in progress. Always writing: his great meditation on the defeat of 1940, *Etrange défaite,* poured out all molten between July and September 1940; his discussions of the historian's craft, *Apologie pour l'histoire,* drafted during 1942 and 1943. As a private person, he was a very comfortable bourgeois, living in a penthouse at Sèvres-Babylone just beside the Hotel Lutetia (later from its headquarters in that same hotel the Gestapo organized the looting of his apartment and removed his library en bloc), protected from interruptions (including those of his children) that would have interfered with his work. Monomania and the means as well as the talent to satisfy it make an ideal recipe for great work. One without the other might have been a waste, but one supporting the other gave us the many-faceted plenitude that we can still admire.

One interesting result of a deliberate reading through of Bloch's work from its beginnings is the impression of consistency one gets—both in style and in the dominant themes or approaches—despite its great variety. Development turns out to be a broadening of scope, an enrichment of sources, a ripening rather than a change. One realm where this shows well is in Bloch's style, which may not be extraordinary today but which stands out, as does Febvre's (though Febvre's style is more peculiar and

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recherché), in the impression it gives of ease, assurance, lack of constraint. Bloch's first great book, the learned study of the healing kings entitled *Les Rois thaumaturges* (1924), reads almost like a story—to my mind, like a detective story. I do not think this detective story aspect of Bloch's history has been remarked on, not even in Robin Winks's compendious *The Historian as Detective* (1968), and yet that seems to be the gist of the *histoire problème* on which he liked to insist.

In July 1914, as a young professor delivering the awards speech at the lycée d'Amiens, Marc Bloch had explained that historians are judges of instruction charged with a vast inquiry of the past. Like our colleagues from the Palais de Justice, he said, we collect testimony, which we use to try to reconstruct reality. This model of a magistrate—embodying an investigator's probity, ingenuity, and quest for a manifold, multifaceted truth (approximate, uncertain, but which one must encompass as best one can)—this high sense of imaginative professionalism keeps coming up in Bloch's work. It was there in the first course in economic history he delivered at the Sorbonne in 1936, when he insisted that history is never a finished product but a process, with the historian the slave of the evidence that past ages have left behind. It comes up again in an article of 1921, on the appearance and circulation of false rumors during the war just ended ("an immense experiment in social psychology"), in which he mobilized the critical methods and the information of a medievalist to analyze a familiar contemporary subject. And it reappears a few years later in *Les Rois thaumaturges*, where his earlier analyses of perception and of collective mentalities were pressed into the service of recondite scholarship. (It surfaces, too, in a letter of December 1935 where, after complaining bitterly about the movie fare offered in Strasbourg at Christmastime, he dreamed of a big article on the cinema. Bourgeois cinema, he notes, is becoming increasingly vapid, but it remains "one of the most marvelous cultural and social barometers we have." The *Annales* should find someone who can do justice to the subject. Its "artistic" and "psychological" aspects are beyond the *Annales*'s scope; but the birth of the industry, the passage from scientific discovery to industrialized entertainment, "*cette révolution du spectacle* for people who hardly ever went to the theatre and never to the *café concert*," deserves the historian's attention.)

And yet, like Marc Bloch, the true historian is more than a detective. The detective's work is to unravel a particular situation, to discover how it came about. To do this he tries to understand the motivations and hence (at least at times) the personalities of the characters involved. He becomes, so to speak, a playwright in reverse, seeking to discern the unfolding script from a rather garbled account of its conclusion.

But the historian seeks to become a character in the play whose tale he tells—before he tells it. To use another simile, he is (ideally) a cultivated traveler arriving in a foreign land he has read much about, foreign but not entirely strange, and yet all the stranger because, although familiar with much and with many he encounters, he is continually surprised at gestures, attitudes, and activities he had not expected, or that he finds more complex, more obscure, than he had thought. Fascinated by the workings of this society, which he refuses to abandon after a swift tour of monuments, landscapes, and eating houses, he settles in it and learns what the natives have picked up simply by being born and living there. Although he becomes a naturalized member of the society he adopts, he cannot take it for granted. A certain distance sets him apart and suggests questions that would not occur to natives, a constant posing of riddles that can only be resolved by experience, deduction, and informed curiosity.

This surely is what Bloch meant when he said that history is nothing but a succession of problems. Yet he who says problems implies selection, discrimination among facts, and ample perspective. This, of course, is the essence of Bloch's style, which insists that without the past there is no understanding of the present, but that conversely the present illumines the past. He uses a thousand little traits taken from a marvelously diverse reality to reconstruct, bit by bit, a general picture more exact but also more nuanced; and he warns that, before going from the particular to the general, you need a broad survey that will tell you how to classify and interpret apparently minor facts.

Like the investigating magistrate's, the historian's task is difficult and demanding, his

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subjects stubborn in their semidarkness. "Only the use of crosslighting (*un jeu de feux croisés*) can hope to shed some light on them." Hence the need to knock down the partitions between disciplines (*abattre les cloisons*), which inspired the foundation of the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*. This periodical was designed by its founders as an *agent de liaison* between geographers, economists, sociologists, statisticians, and historians—and also political scientists such as André Siegfried, whom Bloch managed to lure after much effort to speak for an interest in contemporary matters, an interest still rejected by the historians of the 1920s. The first number of the *Annales* came out in January 1929.

The preliminary correspondence, about the title and so on, shows Febvre insisting on the social and Bloch on the economic aspect of the *Annales* (which at one point Bloch even suggested calling *L'Evolution économique*). Bloch also stressed the need for the journal to reach out beyond the higher seats of academe, to lycée professors, to *érudits de province*, to members of learned societies, even wanting to send these groups a special publicity notice. So, there was the interdisciplinary and comparative approach that we now hear so much about. But also much thought was devoted to the nuts and bolts of scholarship and academe. Erudition is all very well, but it teeters on the verge of sterility if it does not plunge its roots in observation and experience. "Most people seem to go about with their eyes closed, they don't bother to look." *Regarder:* To keep eyes and mind open all the time was Bloch's recurrent message, to recognize the difference between classifications and realities, the tension between traditional classifications and new relations, to show that what some formulas (or histories) represent clearly was actually complex and confused. Equally important was it to be attentive to the material world, the flesh and blood of creatures working in real fields, feeling real weariness, hunger, pain; the adventures of the body, as he called them in *La Société féodale*—how can you pretend to understand men if you do not know how they feel physically?—and so on.

Away with rural histories whose heroes do their plowing with charters. Bloch praised André Allix's study of the Oisans because the author had nothing of the deskbound scholar about him—he had spent nights in barns, he had spoken to the locals, he had plunged into the physical and human reality of his subject. Such essentials ignore disciplinary limits; the facts you look at "should have a human value," not a departmental pigeonhole. In this context, his criticisms of Allix are as revealing as his praise: Allix did not consider distances in terms of time, hence of the changed experience that roads and rails produced; he did not talk about the postal service, which was an "essential element of economic and *intellectual* revolution." You can see that while suggestive, exciting to some, such an approach would be disturbing to others—the more so when it went side by side, increasingly hand in hand as it did with Bloch, with more direct attacks on academic dovecotes and on the doves within them.

Bloch's writings, like his lectures, are littered with criticisms of his colleagues—that is, of practices characteristic of many of his colleagues (though practices fortunately quite unknown in our time). He did not mind honest mediocrity unless it preened itself, but he denounced pretentiousness and pompousness, and "that most deplorable professional iniquity: drivelling." He suspected the original sin of French intellectuals: the tendency to wrap themselves in what the *Canard Enchaîné* calls *paroles verbales*—verbal words.

> In the realm of the positive sciences or of techniques, an idea only has value as an image or abbreviation of concrete facts. Short of that, it is no more than a label that covers a bit of emptiness . . . there is no worse danger for a teacher than to teach words instead of things.

Along with this, and equally irritating no doubt, went Marc Bloch's unrelenting criticism of the educational system. Bloch's first attacks on the history curriculum go back to 1921; his last can be found in the third number of the clandestine *Cahiers politiques*, dated August 1943. In between, he raised the subject tirelessly (some may have thought naggingly), notably in his Oslo paper of 1927, where he described the *programmes de licence* as "garroting" higher education, and again in a major statement of the *Annales* in March 1937, in which he placed the crisis of history teaching in the context of the contemporary social and intellectual crisis. He ar-

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gued that the existing system was hung up on exams and routine, stereotyped, unimaginative, and constraining; it discouraged initiative and stifled originality. It forced candidates to cram and professors to prepare ever-changing courses on sterile, isolated subjects, with the result that they could not do research.

Bloch repeated the same indictment more sharply six years later when he claimed that the defeat of 1940 was a failure of both intelligence and character, and that military disintegration and collapse reflected educational disintegration and failure. The examination mania had turned tests of achievement into achievement itself and had produced generations imbued with the dread of initiative, the avoidance of disinterested curiosity, the cult of success, and, instead of any taste for knowledge, an appreciation of successful cheating and sheer luck. The cures and answers Bloch suggested for all this make melancholy reading today, especially when one realizes how little was done after the war, and how little was actually achieved after 1968. But Bloch (who probably hoped to become minister of education after the liberation and get on with university reform then and there) could not know that the period from 1940 to 1945 was just another instance when history reached a turning point and failed to turn.

Views of this sort, especially when they were strongly held and pungently expressed, did not endear him to all his colleagues, some of whom, at least so I have been told, already considered him cold, distant, and both timid and hypercritical. The enmities he stirred up would hurt him later on, as when, in 1941, his wife's health suggested a move from Clermont-Ferrand to the sunnier climate of Montpellier. The dean of the faculty at Montpellier was Augustin Fliche, the church historian, who apparently made no secret of his anti-Semitism. But Fliche also disliked Marc Bloch for personal reasons (specifically, a bad review), and these must have entered into his opposition to the move and to his making Bloch's life at Montpellier more uncomfortable than it need have been. The same kind of thing helps to explain Bloch's repeated failures to achieve his dream: an appointment to the Collège de France, the only faculty where personal research could be at one with teaching and reflected in it.

Marc Bloch always wanted to be at the Collège de France. Perhaps the same could be said of most French academics, but Bloch really deserved to be there. It has been argued that anti-Semitism entered into the opposition to his appointment, and I think both he and Lucien Febvre believed that to be so. While that is the sort of thing that cannot be proved or disproved, nonetheless in the 1930s Bloch's Jewish origins could easily have figured in the thinking of his colleagues. They obviously did so figure (in a preventive, defensive sense) in Febvre's appreciation of the situation. But Bloch's repeated failures to obtain an appointment at the Collège seem to have simpler, though not necessarily more straightforward, explanations.

The archives of the Collège de France show Bloch signaling his interest in a chair as early as 1928, when the chair of numismatics became vacant and he wrote the *administrateur* to say that, although he did not want to be a candidate at that time, he believed that his kind of work (which he claimed to be alone in doing) "deserves to have its place one day in our great foundation of free scientific research." That day came in 1933, when Camille Jullian, the professor of "national antiquities," died and, with the new year, 1934, the struggle for Jullian's chair began.

Chairs at the Collège are shaped to their incumbents, but their allocation also reflects some faculty consensus about fields and subjects that deserve support. Jullian, while he lived—and his friends after his death—wanted his succession to go to his student, Albert Grenier, an older man than Bloch, also a professor at Strasbourg, and very much in Jullian's field. But in February 1934, Etienne Gilson officially proposed that Jullian's chair should go to Bloch and that it should be devoted to the study of comparative history. Since the comparative history of European societies Bloch wanted to pursue "could not be conceived today in the rigid framework of our universities," the candidate explained, "it seemed natural to propose its creation to an institution that traditionally welcomes scientific novelties." That was a slight exaggeration. The world, Bloch liked to think, belongs to those who love new things. The Collège did not. Since its founding by François I, the sympathy for innovation had grown slack; the traditional academic postures had hardened.

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Gilson belonged to the *Annales* group whose leader, Lucien Febvre, was also a member of the Collège. Febvre was considered a bit too pushy to make a good campaign manager, so he held back as much as he could. But everyone could see that the personal contest between Grenier and Bloch reflected a contest not only between two academic clans, but between two views of history and two quite different schools.

More important in the immediate context was the fact that Bloch's candidacy split the history camp and placed it in an awkward situation vis-à-vis the scientists, themselves divided among partisans of statistics, chemistry, and experimental psychology, but still capable of coming together for pragmatic ends. Furthermore, the psychologists (who could expect to end up with the science votes), although also divided between two candidates, were agreed on the title of the chair they wanted. The historians, divided between Grenier and Bloch, were also divided between a chair for national antiquities and one for comparative history. Since the vote on the chair preceded the vote on who should fill it, Bloch's intervention appeared to jeopardize the historians' chance of cornering the chair.

In mid-March 1934, the faculty of the Collège met to decide the issue. The debate began. Bloch's supporters spoke first, followed by those of Grenier, among them a chemist named Camille Matignon. When Matignon finished, he was followed by one of his friends, a well-known classicist, Eugène Albertini. "But hardly has he spoken a few sentences than the sitting is interrupted, at 3:15, by a tragic event. M. Camille Matignon, suddenly taken ill, falls unconscious; he dies a few moments later in the midst of his colleagues." So the discussion was put off for a few weeks. But the year was 1934 and the country was in the midst of a political crisis, which was also a financial crisis. On April 4, the decrees were published by which the Doumergue cabinet cut the budget, including the budget of the Collège de France, by 10 percent—which meant that neither Jullian nor Matignon could be replaced.

By the end of 1934 two more professors had retired, and "a benevolent application of the decrees" allowed the Collège to keep one of the four chairs it had by then lost. So the faculty met again on Sunday, January 13, 1935, the historians split as expected, but the Grenier party seems to have made a deal with the scientists. By the fourth ballot, comparative history was left with just one vote; national antiquities had reached the necessary majority of twenty-two, and experimental psychology came second with nineteen votes, which meant that it could expect to get the next chair—as indeed it did—the following year.

A year later Bloch returned to the fray, this time aiming for Charles Simiand's chair in labor history. Simiand was an economic sociologist or, if you prefer, a social psychologist, and a co-editor of the *Annales sociologiques*—which is interesting in light of all the fuss that has been made about Bloch's fascination with Durkheim. But the Collège had a new administrator, Joseph Bédier, connected to the traditionalist Ecole des chartes and hence not particularly friendly to the *Annales* even though Bloch had, as a student, attended the courses of his school. More important, some of Simiand's friends felt that Bloch, who had criticized Simiand in a major article only eighteen months before, would not make an appropriate successor to the colleague he had manhandled. But lo! The chair of economic history at the Sorbonne, next door, was about to fall vacant because its holder, Henri Hauser, retired in 1936. So Bloch withdrew his candidacy and set his sights on second best. Since he had not quarreled with Hauser or with too many other historians at the Sorbonne, he won the position, the only economic history chair in France at the time (his appointment would be signed by Léon Blum's minister of education, Jean Zay, another casualty of the approaching war). It was obviously a triumph mitigated not only in terms of prestige but also and above all in terms of professional possibilities.

So the annual round of *cours de licence* and *cours d'agrégation* continued. It did not seem to slow down Bloch's writing, however—or his proselytizing on behalf of a new history. Looking at the lecture notes for the first undergraduate course in economic history that Bloch taught at the Sorbonne in 1936, one finds them to range from Carolingian days to the nineteenth century, with the lecturer never satisfied with actions, always seeking to establish motive. History is but the many-

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stranded story of change. The invitation to approach it as a complex, dynamic process shines through even more clearly in one of Bloch's later courses, delivered in the 1940s at Clermont-Ferrand and Montpellier. We still have the big sheets of yellow paper covered by Bloch's impossible handwriting and by that of his wife—the opening of the first lecture is typical: "Why begin an introduction to Economic History by a sketch of monetary history? Because coin [*monnaie*] is essentially the instrument and the measure of exchanges, and economic life is, above all, founded on exchanges." The concrete reference leads to an analysis that is not static but dynamic.

By that time, the war had come and gone. Bloch had served again, again enjoyed the opportunity for action, however frustrating or desperate the conditions, again won a citation—his fifth. As "the oldest captain in the French army," which is the way he described himself, he had gone through the catastrophe in Flanders and had been taken off the beach at (let's call it) Dunkirk by an English steamer named the *Royal-Daffodil*—describing the setting as they sailed away as being "under golden skies colored by the black and fawn smoke from a burning refinery." With his mates, he was shipped from Dover to Plymouth in a single day and then embarked again for France, where the troopship arrived off Cherbourg at dawn on June 1 and had to wait until port officials opened their shop after 9:00 A.M. Impotent and furious, he had watched the final collapse, before discarding his uniform jacket for a civilian vest and going home to the family farm at Fougères in the Creuse. It was there, between July and September, that he wrote his finest book, *Etrange défaite*, an almost lyrical outpouring of controlled rage.

The fascinating thing about *Etrange défaite* is its disciplined anger: used to fuel not rhetoric but analysis, hence more effective than rhetoric could be—again, not words but things. Sloppiness, slipshoddiness, a system designed to dilute and hence avoid responsibility had marked the French campaign. But, above all, the German victory had been an intellectual victory over people (over *a* people?) who refused to learn from experience, who refused to think. What was the use of French military education, he asked, if it prepared one for anything except for war? But military education was not alone at fault. The whole educational system had to be blamed, even the primary schools—which he generally appreciated, but which had committed "the worst sin": inculcation of a negative view of the fatherland.

For the moment, *Etrange défaite* was buried in the orchard at Fougères to await better days. Bloch went back to teaching until suspended from his job in November 1943. As a Jew, he would have been fired in October 1940 but for a special measure that recognized, not his military services, but his "exceptional scientific services to France." He seems to have been in touch with the first resisters in Clermont-Ferrand; he certainly joined the *Combat* network in Montpellier and helped it to organize the surrounding region. As soon as they were old enough, he sent his two eldest sons to join the Free French forces, which they did after the usual spell in a Spanish jail. It may be that as a Jew, rejected by his government and by many of his fellow Frenchmen, with his life threatened by the Germans (and perhaps not only by the Germans), resistance or flight were his only alternatives. Such a choice would help account for the large number of Jews among the small number of resisters, especially before 1943. But in Bloch's case resistance was also, perhaps above all, the inevitable consequence of a personal humiliation, which reflected the national humiliation that had wounded the honor of both himself and France. A review of Anatole de Monzie's *La Saison des juges*, entitled "La Vraie saison des juges," in the November 1943 number of the *Cahiers politiques*, rejects the possibility of reconciliation, of indulgence extended to traitors and enemies, of a *paix blanche*. "The punishment of traitors does not only answer to a profound and legitimate need of the popular conscience . . . for us it will also be . . . the only way to avenge our national honor."

By 1943, back in Lyon, which was, of course, the resistance capital of France as well as his own birthplace, Bloch had become a full-time underground organizer (he used archival research as pretext for his travels) and, soon, a leader of the *Franc-Tireur* group. As we know, and like most others, he did not last long. Within a few months he was arrested, tortured, and killed. His wife had died in Lyon while he was in prison. In 1977 Bloch's

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ashes were transferred from Saint Didier-de-Formans (Ain) and buried near Fougères, in the cemetery of Bourg d'Hem, in the rolling countryside he had come to love. On his gravestone, the only memorial is the phrase he had chosen for himself: DILEXIT VERITATEM.

No one demonstrates better than Marc Bloch that the great historian contributes, not a model, but the suggestion of a new way of going about our business, not a *vision*, but a *view;* vision surviving at best as a document of its times, the view adding to historical understanding. There is not so much history that we can learn from Bloch today. His history has become part of the history we have learned already—to such an extent, indeed, that reaction may be timely, if not already underway. The local and national provincialisms against which he recommended supranational and comparative studies may be ready for fresh explorations; the trivializing personalization of history that he denounced has been replaced by the equally trivializing emphasis of collective phenomena. The sins of kings-and-battles history against which he inveighed through his participation in social groups and doings cannot justify the obliteration of individual men, let alone of heroic figures that have caused history to tilt. And the pedantocracy he prosecuted now rules in his name.

But it would be naive to dismiss Bloch just because we have already learned his history. There is more to history than a story, however richly we go about its telling. "The distant past," Bloch wrote only a few months before he was arrested, "inspires the sense and the respect of differences between men, at the same time as it refines our sensitiveness to the poetry of human destinies." In this context all pasts may be considered distant; all meditations upon other lives and times to inspire and refine.

The essential that is left of Bloch's writings is his style, and there he remains idiosyncratically singular and fascinating. Herbert Butterfield, very much a representative of our time, has suggested that half-truths are a good way of writing trenchant history. Bloch proves him wrong. He knew that truth was inaccessible, perhaps indefinable, but like Olive Schreiner's hunter, he pursued it as and where he could, made very clear the possibilities, the thrills, and the failures of his quest—*our* quest. It may even be that, in that bloody field near Saint Didier, Marc Bloch died clutching a feather of the white bird of truth—his truth.

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End of the Voyage

VERNON YOUNG

Elie Faure, whose five-volume *History of Art* no one outside France seems to read anymore, once claimed that we are united by our differences because we approach one another in order to study them. In a comprehensive view of modern history, this seductive inference is a double-edged sword. We have been approaching one another with accelerating frequency for more than two hundred years, but especially since the age of mass travel was initiated by the industrial revolution. Is it possible to say now that more people have been united by their differences than have been destroyed by them? A brash question and not one I am prepared to answer in haste. I have raised it because it has so often been the implicit subject, if not the main drift, in the uncertain category of literature with which I am here dealing: books of travel written in our day by dilettantes, that is to say, by writers who have not been primarily naturalists or missionaries or official explorers or big-game hunters or political journalists. I am exclusively concerned with educated observers who have gratuitously—many of them have so alleged—decided to visit countries as divergent as possible from their own and who have set down afterward, with varying degrees of candor and art, what it was like to be there.

The underlying motive of the articulate travelers who crowded the scene in the twenties and thirties has been critically defined by Paul Fussell in his admirable survey of British travelers between the wars, *Abroad*: "To the degree that literary travel between the wars constitutes an implicit rejection of industrialism and everything implied by the concept of 'modern Western Europe,' it is a celebration of a Golden Age. . . . One travels to experience the past, and travel is thus an adventure in time as well as in distance." This seems to me profoundly true and is supported by nearly every writer of distinction who has written a travel journal in this century.

Another important qualification presents itself whenever you scrutinize the conclusions of the several escapists who fled from the materialism of the western world into the jungle cultures of Africa and the Andes or to the plateaus of the Middle East. Eager as they sometimes were to recover the simplicities of a "Golden Age," they invariably rejected the premises when they came face to face with the labyrinthine evasions of the Asiatic mind or the poverty of concepts represented by the primitive mentality. Unconsciously, most of these high-minded fugitives agreed with E. M. Forster's Fielding in *A Passage to India* who, pausing in the Mediterranean on his way home from the East, recognized that for him there could be no true beauty without form, that the buildings of Venice "stood in the right place, whereas in poor India everything was placed wrong," and that "something more precious than [the] mosaics and marbles" of Saint Mark's spoke to him now: "The harmony between the works of man and the earth that upholds them, the civilization that has escaped muddle, the spirit in a reasonable form. . . . The Mediterranean is the human norm. When men leave that exquisite lake, whether through the Bosphorus or the Pillars of Hercules, they approach the monstrous and extraordinary."

Whatever reasons, conscious or subconscious, were advanced by European intellec-

VERNON YOUNG is the author of *Cinema Borealis: Ingmar Bergman and the Swedish Ethos* and *On Film: Unpopular Essays on a Popular Art*.

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tuals for exploring the hinterlands of the globe, the shock of formlessness usually had the last word. André Gide's *Travels in the Congo*, written in 1929, is a case in point. Writing his day-by-day memoirs, Gide at first tries hard to take an intelligent interest in native customs, in the odd linguistic assumptions they reveal, in the fauna and the flora, in the manufacture of palm oil. As time goes by, however, he loses his grip on such details, overthrown by the unfamiliarity, the unselective life of man and plants, by homesickness for European clothes, the principle of cause and effect, Paris and literature and the fine arts. The reader senses that, before half his journey is done, Gide would much rather write essays on the paintings of Simone Martini, Benozzo Gozzoli, or Corot—with which he strives to compare swatches of the Congo landscape—or write letters to Roger Martin du Gard about Baudelaire and Goethe. Repeatedly Gide professes himself intimidated by the vegetation itself, a subaqueous paradigm of the subhuman scene.

> Beside me is a tuft of great papyri-like palm-trees rising out of the water, and exceedingly handsome, though the greater part of them are faded, and behind me the greatest mixture of grass and water that it is possible to imagine. Again I see the enormousness, the formlessness, the indecision, the absence of direction, of design, of organization, which so excessively disturbed me during the first part of our journey, which is indeed the chief characteristic of this country. But here the perplexity of nature, this wedding and welding of the elements, this *blending* of grey and blue, of grass and water, are so strange and recall so little of anything in our countries (unless perhaps certain pools in the Camargue or in the neighborhood of Aguesmortes) that I cannot stop gazing at it.

Even where most negative, Gide felt constrained to find a French analogy as a touchstone. At a spot called Maroua he notes his fourth rereading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. "It is only after having seen the country that I realize how good it is." On the particular aspects of Conrad's novel that he found cogent he does not expatiate—it could scarcely have been the anti-imperialist theme, since his own observations on the subject of exploitation are neither passionate nor convincing. One could infer that the young M. Gide felt *d'accord* with Conrad's turgid visions of barbarism and the nameless rites that took possession of Mr. Kurtz—yet he suggests no atavistic stirrings of the elementary impulses. On the contrary, Gide restricts his impressions mainly to those of an aesthetic kind: confronted by the overlapping and prolific condition of everything, he affirmed that the necessity for *differentiation* among phenomena seemed to him the principal sensation with which he left the country.

For Graham Greene, five years later, Liberia was not so much a welcome reversal of civilization—which to his sense had *not* "escaped muddle"—as it was an indispensable reminder that since society at home was breaking down under the twin pressures of violence and ratified mediocrity, one could escape into a raw territory that was its mocking paraphrase. His journey through this dismal, infected country—he walked for four weeks to cover about 350 miles—was a *Journey Without Maps* (the title of his book), which he fondly believed to be a psychoanalytic journey into the antecedent stages of human consciousness. What he, in fact, tramped through was a country whose native tribes had had imposed on them, a century before, a foreign body of freed slaves. Shortly before Greene's visit to this quasi-utopia, the regime in power had been found guilty of exporting slave labor. By Greene's description of the place, Liberia then consisted of a shabby and corrupt urban coastal area squatting at the edge of a primeval forest, with an unspeakable climate, abject superstitious natives, a few pathetically courageous missionaries living among the cockroaches and the guinea worms: a setting wholly compatible, of course, with Mr. Greene's compulsive interest in, and inexhaustible talent for, describing the hopeless and the seedy.

Greene arrived exhausted at a hut in the remote interior, without his native carriers, who had refused to cross a precarious bridge in the dark. Hence he had no beds, no mosquito nets, no lamps, no food, no air filter for the blanketing heat. "And suddenly," Greene tells us,

> I felt curiously happy and careless and relieved. One couldn't, I was sure, get lower than Duogob-

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mai. I had been afraid of the primitive, had wanted it broken gently, but here it came on us in a breath, as we stumbled up through the dung and the cramped and stinking huts to our lampless sleeping place among the rats. It was the worst one need fear, and it was bearable because it was inescapable.

Few writers of any persuasion have anything like Greene's resources for conveying the nuances of gratification from self-punishment. Having completed his ostensible journey into the fears of childhood and returned to Grand Bassa on the coast, a third-rate mock-up of England at its dowdiest, he ruminated begrudgingly:

We were all of us back in the hands of adolescence and I thought rebelliously: I am glad, for here is iced beer and a wireless set which will pick up the Empire programme from Daventry, and after all it is home, in the sense that one has been taught to know home, where one will soon forget the finer taste, the finer pleasure, the finer terror on which one might have built.

Where? In the jungles of Liberia? Did Greene sense "finer terror" in the old man he saw "beaten with a club outside the poky little prison at Tappee Ta," or in "the naked widows at Tailahum covered with yellow clay and the wooden toothed devil swaying his raffia skirts between the huts," or in that "lampless sleeping place among the rats"? That we were at the zenith and the nadir simultaneously on a route from primitive Africa to twentieth-century Europe was, even as a figure of speech, a wild reading of history and ethnology. It was not in Africa where "we" lost our innocence! And the finer tastes and pleasures on which we have built were still available to Mr. Greene; but, like many of the British intelligentsia of the twenties and thirties, he was so dismayed at the contradictions of a failing Christian society (revealed to him by the First World War, perhaps) that the gesture of repudiating that society entirely—at least within the confines of rhetoric—was as appealing to him as it has been to a legion of dissidents since.

A large part of Graham Greene's appeal as a novelist is the fascinated horror with which his unheroic heroes have stared into the bottom of the bottle and found it bearable because it was inescapable. This also may account for his personal conversion to Catholicism, his flirtation with communism, his nostalgia for the tawdry suburbs of the world, his snubbing, in general, of a society in which free choice may lead one to sorrow and madness. Unlike D. H. Lawrence, he did not go in search of a noble savage; he simply wanted to reassure himself that the ignoble one was within reach, there on the west coast of Africa. Certainly he had come closer than Gide to Conrad's heart of darkness. His description of its physical milieu is indelible; his attempt to incorporate it as a moral resource was largely histrionic.

Halfway, so to speak, between Conrad's Congo and Greene's Liberia, is H. M. Tomlinson's Amazon, the central presence of his splendid book *The Sea and the Jungle*. I have no hesitation in pronouncing this work a classic in the field of travel literature. Tomlinson was not your intrepid pioneer struggling on foot or muleback through malarial swamps and thickets, looking for primordial images of the self. On his voyage to the interior of Brazil during 1909 and 1910—those innocent years before the decline of the West was agreed upon—he functioned in the unglamorous role of purser (though few experiences were to him without glamor) on a tramp steamer from Swansea headed uncertainly, after Belém, by way of both the Amazon and Madeira rivers to San Antonio Falls, two thousand miles from the Amazon's mouth. He claimed to have met by chance, when boarding a commuter train to London, the skipper who later hired him. Probably the claim was an adroit fiction; it served the spirit of unabashed romance in which the enterprise was undertaken. To the captain's challenge, Tomlinson responded with alacrity: "It would be a noble journey. They would see Obydos and Santarem, and the foliage would brush their rigging at times, so narrow would be the way, and where they anchored at night the jaguars would come to drink." The ensuing pages are among the most evocative ever written, with an exotic landfall as their subject. Tomlinson saw the world—the ocean, the sky, America taking shape above the delta of that mighty flood, the wildlife and the tame life—with eyes totally fresh and with a mind so alert to wonder that you would believe him to be witnessing the

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dawn of creation on earth. There is not an unwritten sequence in his narrative; every paragraph is a cadence of discovery.

> I have been watching it for so long, this abiding and soundless forest, that now I think it is like the sky, intangible, an apparition; what the eye sees of the infinite, just as the eye sees a blue color overhead at midday, and the glow of the Milky Way at night. For the mind sees this forest better than the eye. The mind is not deceived by what merely shows. Wherever the steamer drives, the forest recedes, as does the sky at sea; but it never leaves us.
>
> The jungle gains nothing, and loses nothing, at noon. It is only a dubious thought still, as at midnight. It is still at noon so obscure and dumb a presence that I suspect the sun does not illuminate it so much as reveal our steamer in its midst. We are revealed instead. The presence sees us advancing into its solitudes, a small, busy, and impudent intruder. But the forest does not greet, and does not resent us. It regards us with the vacancy of large composure, with a lofty watchfulness which has no need to show its mind.

If Tomlinson somewhat insistently employed the pathetic fallacy to celebrate the mystery of that "abiding and soundless forest" gliding by for two thousand miles, "a shadow on the mind," he resisted the temptation to convert the river itself into anything like Conrad's "deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness." He remained an interrogator with a poet's insatiable thirst for beauty and a scientist's decent respect for actuality.

Not unmindful of cruelty and death, Tomlinson italicized them no more than nature does in the cycle of things. In the ecology of the Amazon, headhunters are as welcome as butterflies. Dispassionately, he watches a praying mantis devouring its victim. "He eats it . . . as you do apples and the authentic mouthfuls of fly can be seen passing down his glassy neck. [He] is fragile as a new leaf in form, has the same delicate colour and has fascinating ways; but somehow he gives an observer the uncomfortable thought that the means to existence on this earth, though intricate and wonderfully devised, might have been managed differently." One of the most impressive interludes in the book is his discourse on "the power of the torrid sun" on a morning spent along a railway track near the hospital of Pôrto Velho (population 300). He felt the generative glow that spawned clouds of butterflies:

> a mother heat and light whose ardent virtues stained pinions crimson and cobalt, and made bodies strong and convulsive and caused the earth to burst with rushing sap. . . . You could hear the incessant low murmur of multitudinous wings. And I had been warned to beware of all this. I felt instead that I could live and grow for ever in such a land.

Tomlinson's reverie was interrupted by a flatcar being pumped down the track toward the ship. As it passed, he saw "something under a white cloth; the cloth moulded a childish figure, of which only the hem of a skirt and the neat little booted feet showed beyond, and the feet swayed limply with the jolts of the car in a way curiously appealing and woeful." It was the body of the only white female in that community, a Brazilian girl from the coast who had been ailing and "wouldn't go home when told, poor thing."

Not the least notable feature of *The Sea and the Jungle* is that it is one of the few books in our time, written on a Latin-American theme by an outsider, that might safely be called affirmative. Excepting the studies of naturalists such as Alexander von Humboldt, H. W. Bates, and W. H. Hudson, nearly every famous work—of fiction or fact—written by a northerner about Central or South America has been, at the heart, a history of sustained aversion. Both D. H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* and Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* are permeated with death and with the anomaly of the European consciousness in Mexico. Gusts of irritation sweep through Graham Greene's *Another Mexico* and Christopher Isherwood's *The Condor and the Cows*, but in these the vexation is mild if compared with Henri Michaux's *Ecuador* (1929). Animated by what he thought was a profound distaste for European civilization, Michaux escaped to the Andes and the sources of the Amazon where, traveling by foot, car, horseback, and canoe, he compounded the local miseries of travel—tropical weather, unfriendly natives, malaria, and jaundice—by taking opium and ether. Predictably he experienced Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil as a composite hell, and in his enraged outcry (the loudest before Paul Theroux's in 1979) there is nothing of the wit or the sardonic

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reverence that informs Michaux's later work, *A Barbarian in Asia.* (1933).

A creation of immense charm, nonetheless pejorative in sum, is Charles Macomb Flandrau's *Viva Mexico!*, first published in 1908 and regrettably out of print today. Conceivably Mexico has become so profitable as a destination for package tourism and so solicitous an object of mollifying sociology that Flandrau's unapologetic sketches are too filled with whimsical disdain to be tolerated. I have found them a pleasure to reread. Flandrau was an elegant stylist, a master of euphemism, and the lucid observer of a wide range of curiosa in a country he appears to have found fundamentally boring. Yet on Mexican children, on dirt eaters, on clerical routine, on the incense in Puebla Cathedral, on the complex art of coffee raising, on the tightrope question of Mexican honor, and on the dire character of American tourists he is unfailingly graphic and, if courtly, uncompromising. Years before Evelyn Waugh taught travelers how to damn with faint praise, Flandrau was writing sentences such as this: "Wealth, education and travel often combine to render unimportant persons who, had they stayed at home in a state of comparative poverty and ignorance, would perhaps have been worthy of one's serious consideration."

Waugh himself never wrote a better excursion, I think, than *Ninety-two Days* (1934), in which he recounted his arduous journey through British Guiana to Brazil, and back to the coast by another river route, for God knows what reason (and that's an appropriate idiom, surely)—certainly not for the reason he gave. "One does not travel, any more than one falls in love, to collect material. It is simply part of one's life." Even if this were true, it would not explain his choice of British Guiana—as dreary an acreage as any I know—from all the other journeys to forbidding interiors. The insouciance with which Evelyn Waugh had taken his fastidious sensibilities into outbacks and wildernesses where even rudimentary comfort is unknown was one of the more Mona Lisa aspects of his character. There is no evidence that he was looking for agony to convince himself, in the Graham Greene manner, that the ways of God are variously strange. He always kept his distance, he was seldom awed, never galvanized by impatience, never undermined by presences of evil or by spectacular states of exhaustion. Toward the end of *Ninety-two Days*, he expressed the fear that perhaps "too much of it [his account] has dealt with the difficulties of getting from place to place. But that," he concluded, "seems to me unavoidable for it is the preoccupation of two-thirds of the traveler's waking hours, and the matter of all his nightmares. It is by crawling on the face of it that one learns a country; by the problems of transport that its geography becomes a reality and its inhabitants real people." Then and there we are reminded that Waugh became a skilled commando in the Second World War; and there is no question that his Guiana expedition, every bit as grueling as Greene's walk in Liberia, if not as endangered as Michaux's in the Andean headwaters, must have been excellent preparation for the beaches of Normandy and the coast of Yugoslavia.

Even so, as convincing as he is when telling you how he walked or paddled or painfully rode from here to there, Waugh's métier is people—the only kind you can ever expect to meet in settlements as remote as the rivers of Guiana–weird people. He has insisted in a later, very dull, book (*Tourist in Africa*, 1960): "As happier men watch birds, I watch men. They are less attractive but more various." In Guiana he watched, and listened to with great trepidation, men whom he would subsequently use, with modifications, as characters in *A Handful of Dust*. At Boa Vista he was confined for weeks with a Father Alcuin, who spoke no English, and a Mr. Steingler, who spoke no language intelligibly. Early on he met Mr. Bain, an emaciated Creole commissioner for the Georgetown district, benign and garrulous, who "talked at large on every conceivable topic, eagerly, confidently, enthusiastically, not always accurately, sometimes scarcely coherently, inexhaustibly; with inspired imagination, with dizzy changes of thought and rather alarming theatrical effects, in a vocabulary compounded of the jargon he was accustomed to use among his subordinates and the longer, less habitual words he had noticed in print."

Peter Fleming's *Brazilian Adventure* (1934) is a more exciting book than Waugh's because it has, in its way, a plot. Fleming's reason for

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going to Brazil was to join a search party looking for a Colonel Fawcett who, with his son and a companion, had disappeared years before in an unexplored territory of the Matto Grosso. Fleming told a suspense story; for this reason and for the intrinsic interest of the setting—the Indian tribes, the alligator shooting, the seven-foot-long otters, the "harmless" piranha, forest fires, and ice-cold rain—the book was a best-seller in its day. Fleming wrote from the outside; he was not an anti-intellectual, but simply an empiricist who concentrated on telling a good story without the luxury of intellectual parentheses. He was perhaps the narrator par excellence of travel as physical adventure, of the fine art of living dangerously. *News from Tartary*, published only two years thereafter, is even more enthralling, to my taste at least, because the occasion engrossed by it took place on a stage immensely more significant in the history of mankind and more dramatic by reason of its spatial grandeur: the plateaus and mountains of central Asia where China, Russia, Tibet, and India converge. Fleming, as a special correspondent for the *Times*, was expected to find out what was taking place in the vast province of Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan) which, since an outbreak of civil war in 1933, had been incommunicado. Nobody could get in; nobody could get out; rumors held that a "Foreign Power" was commandeering the province.

Fleming found himself leading a party of four with the unrevealed intention of proceeding from Peking to Kashmir by way of north Tibet and Sinkiang, a distance of nearly four thousand miles (by lorry, on foot, on camel, and on yak), with no passports for Sinkiang. As in *Brazilian Adventure*, Fleming made light of the difficulties involved ("great decisions and small deeds"), sometimes with a bit too much of the stiff-upper-lip act. But as he advances across wastes of waterless desert at altitudes above nine thousand feet, he rises to his subject; as they cross the so-called Tsaidam Marsh, their entry to Sinkiang, he confesses the awe with which his ordeal was informed.

> We took a certain pride in the very slowness and the primitive manner of our progress. We were travelling Asia at Asia's pace. . . . We had left the Twentieth Century behind with the lorries at Lanchow, and now we were up against the immemorial obstacles, the things which had bothered Alexander and worried the men who rode with Chinghis Khan—lack of beasts, lack of water, lack of grazing. We were doing the same stages every day that Marco Polo would have done if he had branched south from the Silk Road to the mountains.

Fleming's books are not works of art, but they are endlessly engaging to read; they transcend the pragmatic occasions that invoked them, they stimulate the imagination, and they leave you with the distinct feeling that you have been in the company of "a man for all seasons" who is cheerful, educated, courageous, and ethical. (In later years, Fleming enlisted his firsthand experience, his zeal for research and his balanced political sense in the service of recent and contemporary history: an outstanding example is his *Bayonets to Lhasa: The First Full Account of the British Invasion of Tibet in 1904.)*

That a woman—one Ella Maillart (nicknamed Kini), a special correspondent for a Paris newspaper—accompanied Fleming to the frontier of India is noteworthy to add. A Swiss-born journalist of remarkable attainments (among other feats she had sailed for Switzerland in the Olympics and walked across the Caucasus), she arouses admiration, if not incredulity, crossing half a continent on five barley loaves and two small fishes, as it were, with a man she had met once and briefly. Fleming never quite fills her in as a personality (she seems not to have been confiding) but he is gallant to a fault, vowing that she did everything more competently than he.

Woman in the Wilds. If Lady Hester Stanhope was the first of her English kind, a woman of aristocratic family who left it all behind her to wander in the Near East and finally become an autocrat among the tribes of Syria in the 1820s, perhaps Freya Stark was the last, although her resemblance to Lady Stanhope did not extend to imperial ambition or mystic delusion. She was the last, let us say, who wrote travel books. There is something altogether fey in the picture we get (in *The Valleys of the Assassins*, 1936) of this patrician: an erudite woman (an authority on the Lurs of Pusht-i-Kuh, she had learned "scanty Arabic and a little Persian, just for fun") riding a mule through the valleys and around the

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mountains of Persia, as if she were bewitched, in the company of a guide known as The Refuge of Allah, whose calm response to her materialistic explanations might be, "Anyone can see that it's an insect that eats the moon"; or traveling with a muleteer who complains, at her haste in rough country, "This bitterness, this roughness, for the sons of Adam!"; or being blandly asked to smuggle opium into Iraq on her return from Luristan; or encountering Kurds who, because she spoke Arabic, thought it was the language of Great Britain. Reading this enchanting book today, with the tribal life she recounts unchanged (in 1927) since the tenth century, we rub our eyes in wonder to realize that this is the country that, for over a year recently, was a standing outrage and one of the supreme banalities of the television networks, being obsessively identified with "the fate of the American hostages." Freya Stark eating sheep tongue, jam, and pomegranates while looking for hidden treasure in Luristan is somehow not an aspect of Iran's interior that you would expect to impose on the audience of Walter Cronkite.

I am baffled by Paul Fussell's refusal to include Freya Stark in his discussion of English travelers in *Abroad* on the ground that she was not a stylist of the first order. She meets the first obligation of the travel writer: she helps you *see*. Further, she meets the tacit obligation of such a writer, that is, to make fine distinctions.

> The tribesman in his heart knows that freedom, his own virtue, comes first in the order of things: it can in a pinch stand alone, while the beauty of law is of a secondary order, dependent for its excellence on the existence of the other as a basis. . . . He is an aristocrat. In our complicated lives the advantage of aristocracy is that of being able voluntarily to undergo those disciplines which are forced without choice on men less fortunately circumstanced: to eat bread and water from necessity has a depressing effect; to do so from choice is, in a reasonable measure, good for the soul; and the civilized use of riches is to become voluntarily independent of them. The nomad does not go so far: but he does prefer his lean emancipation to the flesh-pots of settled behaviour; and this makes him an insufferable neighbor but a gallant man.

Between Hester Stanhope and Freya Stark were seven redoubtable—and oppressively idealistic—women globe-trotters, of whom a substantial monument is Dorothy Middleton's excellent account, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (1965).

The Second World War, beginning with the Spanish Civil War, and together with the incremental industry of mass tourism and the appearance of the ubiquitous refugee, destroyed or importantly vitiated the travel diary as a work of art and a chronicle of idiosyncratic discovery. As Fussell has noted, the travel book became the war book and then the sociological commentary, "setting people right about the situation here or there; it abandons subtlety and irony; it grows political . . . and self-righteous." Explorations of faraway places have not ceased, but masterpieces are fewer and farther between. As a substitute one is proffered the frequently astounding photographs of the *National Geographic* magazine, accompanied by texts so decaffeinated and pulverized they can scarcely be defined as prose.

Standards of language and of critical intelligence have been admirably upheld in the travel lore of the past twenty years by that Brahmin among interpreters of the foreign strand, James (now Jan) Morris. She has not often been attracted to the faceless portions of the earth, for she is closer to being a cultural historian than an explorer of life in the raw. The culture she reports is normally urban, and her empirical enthusiasm is tempered by her institutional background: an Oxford education, service in the British army and, after the war, special assignments for the *Guardian*. the London *Times* and the *Arab News Agency*. For her insecure allegiance to the liberalism of the *Guardian* in earlier years, she has explained in her autobiography, *Conundrum*: "The elements I craved were fire, salt, laughter: the *Guardian*'s specialties were fairness, modesty, and rational assessment. I liked a touch of swank; the *Guardian* shied from it like a horse from a phantom." Her several essays and books exhibit more fairness, modesty, and rational assessment than she concedes here. What, indeed, stamps her work is the scrupulous balance with which she researches and evaluates the numerous cities and countries she has elected to visit. (It may not be gratuitous to suggest that the dual sex she has experienced is reflected in her

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perpetual habit of qualifying her most conclusive judgments with "on the other hand. . . .") Sometimes you regret this rigorous impartiality. You find yourself hoping, as she gathers Singapore or Tangier or Los Angeles or Venice into her nutshell, that she will stop temporizing and give rein to her patent enthusiasm and "a touch of swank" or else surrender to her latent antipathy.

For that reason, I prefer *The Presence of Spain* (written in 1963 when she was still James) to all of Jan Morris's other books. Spain overwhelmed her, as it does most astute writers of North European and Protestant roots. Although she tried hard to report as many utilitarian and forward-looking prospects as she could find, she was more positively affected by the harsher face of things, omnipresent in the cities as well as in the villages. After contriving, in Andalusia, little scenarios of the stock characters of Spanish legend and of *Carmen*, she admits that Spain at its grassless foundation was "still a country, by and large, without running water, without lavatories, without enough schools and hospitals." And yet, despite the denuded soil, "the heat and the cold and the poverty and the ever-present abstractions of God, Death and the Inquisition," or perhaps because of these, Spain was greater than the sociology that found it backward. What stokes the eloquence of her best pages *is* the Spain of the Inquisition, of the crimson Renaissance, of Goya; the Spain embodied in the Dolorosa of Salamanca and in the Black Virgin of Montserrat; the Spain of the cities she differentiated so well: Madrid, Ávila, Valladolid, Tarragona, above all Toledo ("like one of those El Greco characters . . . in fact conceived here—towering, handsome, humourless, sad, a little bloodless"); the Spain of thirty-two thousand priests, twenty thousand monks, seventy-one thousand nuns, and twenty-five thousand seminarians.

Jan Morris feared that this clerical, reactionary Spain, if it improved the conditions that strike us as hopelessly retrograde, would by the same token lose the ferocious integrity that gives it a profile unique among the nations of Europe. Tourism, foreign investments, and progressive social reforms are humanly preferable to the stagnant condition of a country marked by provincial conceit, perrennial dictatorship, and the *Guardia Civil*. It is a familiar question: How does a country liberate itself without importing the junk behavior that will debase it in another fashion? Jan Morris is always effective when she finds a reconciling metaphor. One of her most persuasive is found in the final paragraph of her book; as a rhetorical flourish, it is perhaps unsurpassed in the literature.

Seen from the ridge road between the Escorial and the Vale of the Fallen:

> There it all is, like a mirage in the morning: the space and the dust and the pride of it all, the chuffing steam trains on the high plateau, the tall golden towers beside the rivers of Spain, the storks and the priests and the policemen. It is the kind of high prospect that hermits look for, when they want to sit down with a skull on the table, and think about the future.

And if Spain, the last bastion of mystery and pride in Europe, is homogenized and obliterated by the great commonplaces of industrial democracy, what ceremony remains for the passionate pilgrim to relate except the low tide of poetry and the expansion of petit-bourgeois condominiums stretching across the savannas of Africa and all the beaches of the world? Sacheverell Sitwell mourned long ago, "When I think of how beautiful the world has been and how beautiful it could be, I could walk up and down and wring my hands and weep!" Wherever you investigate a backward country struggling to "catch up" or a torpid civilization of the East adopting Western customs, you can expect to find kitsch, corruption, and the kind of incongruity that has provoked the mirth of an Evelyn Waugh or the scorn of a Paul Theroux.

Any student of the cultural future in dominions outside our own might sober his prophecies by reading V. S. Naipaul on India. Calling upon the double advantage (and inhibition) of being an Indian brought up elsewhere, Naipaul speaks with sad authority in the book that records his homecoming to India from Trinidad, wherein he views his country with both the sentiment of a native and the conditioning of a colonial influenced by western psychology. *An Area of Darkness* (1964) is indeed a travel book; its geography extends from Kashmir to Madras, from Karachi to Calcutta. Ulti-

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mately it is a work of inferences, the particulars ruthlessly examined and brooded upon by an enlightened mind with an authentic respect for the precolonial past. Naipaul found a condition of schizophrenia everywhere in India. Speaking of the generic Anglo-Indian set, he wrote:

> That little corner of merry England which they have created in Bombay is also Druidical. It worships fire; its ways are narrow and protective, and at the end lie the Towers of Silence and the grim rites behind those walls whose main portals are marked with a symbol from the ancient world.
>
> The outer and inner worlds do not have the physical separateness which they had for us in Trinidad. They coexist; the society only pretends to be colonial; and for this reason its absurdities are at once apparent. Its mimicry is both less and more than a colonial mimicry. It is the special mimicry of an old country which has been without a native aristocracy for a thousand years and has learned to make room for outsiders, but only at the top. The mimicry changes, the inner world remains constant: this is the secret of survival. And so it happens that, to one whole area of India, a late seventeenth-century traveller like Ovington remains in many ways a reliable guide. Yesterday the mimicry was Mogul; tomorrow it might be Russian or American; today it is English.

What he usually called in this book "the medieval mind" he accounts for in his later work, *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), by employing the terminology of psychotherapy, which declares the Indian's confusion of disparity with continuity to be the expression of a fundamentally different perception of reality. This perception, compared with ours, "is closer to a certain stage in childhood when outer objects did not have a separate, independent existence but were intimately related to the self and its affective states." Hence, Naipaul believes that "it is more difficult, even unlikely, for an Indian to withdraw from experience and analyze it." Here it is not necessary for me to review Naipaul's postscript to a larger subject. But recalling Elie Faure's observation that we approach one another to study our differences, I ask myself how you can alter a perception of reality that is innate. We are back to E. M. Forster and we recapitulate with Paul Theroux.

If ever there was a man unprepared to be sympathetic with the casuistry of an Asiatic, or with the parlance of the tourist agency, that man is Paul Theroux. His two travel books to date, *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975) and *The Old Patagonian Express* (1979) are anthologies of nausea through which, one must confess, there appears to run a distinct thread of sadomasochism. If you insist on traveling third class around Asia and from south of the United States border through the nether Americas, you can pretty well count in advance on being miserably accommodated, foully fed, and most of the time bored or revolted by your companions. Why would you expect on third-class trains in mainly Third World countries to meet any but third-class people? Theroux launches himself as if trusting to fortune, then narrates an unceasing montage of dismal encounters, culinary disasters, idiotic inefficiency, conversational brainlessness, and abysmal hygiene. (Indeed, in *The Great Railway Bazaar* he is driven to calling it, at last, The Turd World.) This is not often depressing to read; it is too vituperative to be depressing, and it is sometimes even very funny. Although Theroux may well be accused of high-handedness, as when, for instance, he dismisses Japan in a few pages containing descriptions of sordid entertainments and dialogues with fatuous professors, where he has researched a subject, besides merely confronting it, his summarizing paragraphs can be unarguably damning.

> As Calcutta smells of death and Bombay of money, Bangkok smells of sex, but this sexual aroma is mingled with the sharper whiffs of death and money . . . a hugely preposterous city of temples and brothels.
>
> [Of Afghanistan] Formerly it was cheap and barbarous, and people went there to buy lumps of hashish—they would spend weeks in the filthy hotels of Herat and Kabul, staying high. But there was a military coup in 1973, and the king (who was sunning himself in Italy) was deposed. Now Afghanistan is expensive but just as barbarous as before. Even the hippies have begun to find it intolerable. The food smells of cholera, travel there is always uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous, and the Afghans are lazy, idle, and violent.

Theroux has been justly criticized for ignoring or minimizing the history and traditions of the manifold places he has sped through. I find conspicuous in his breezy way of judgment the absence of any felt criterion, save that of

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creature comfort. We never know from what cultural ideal he is maintaining his perspective. What Theroux recites is what he experiences and, for purposes of reality (that is, the event one is called upon to cope with), he conveys with a tart flavor precisely what, at the moment, he is experiencing. I might add that he must be colossally indifferent to beauty, since I cannot suppose that the thousands of miles he covered, either in the East or in the southern Americas, were as devoid of scenic interest as he implies. Also, he must certainly have arranged his itinerary so that it would not conceivably intersect the life of the mind or of worldly society. Except for his interview with Jorge Luis Borges, he appears deliberately to have avoided having to confess that there is anyone anywhere in South America who thinks, creates, lays a chic table, conducts a respectable business, or smells fragrant.

> Limón looked like a dreadful place. It had just rained, and the town stank. The station was on a muddy road near the harbor, and puddles reflected the decaying buildings and over-bright lights. The smell of dead barnacles and damp sand, flooded sewers, brine, oil, cockroaches and tropical vegetation which, when soaked, gives off the hot moldy vapor you associate with compost heaps in summer, the stench of mulch and mildew. It was a noisy town as well: clanging music, shouts, car horns.
>
> Visitors to Guayaquil are urged to raise their eyes, for on a clear day it is possible to see the snowy hood of Mount Chimborazo from the humid streets of this stinking city; and if you look down, all you see is rats.

Theroux's travel writing meets one important requirement of the genre. It convinces you that, after all, you had best stay at home.

Of Patagonia Theroux had little to say (perhaps by that time he was too exhausted to ratify his worst fears). Which is just as well, for it leaves a clear field in which to relish Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977), a polychrome, Flaubertian glimpse of that terminal country—region, to be accurate, since it is administered jointly by Argentina and Chile. Our primary impression of the place as landscape, by reference to Chatwin's hard, gem-like paragraphs, is of a thinly populated plateau (mountains to the west) into which various desperadoes have disappeared or in the valleys of which they have entrenched ("Butch" Cassidy among them); where revolutions have ignited and been bloodily extinguished; and on the coasts of which stout men with a talent for mythomania have been wrecked. Here and there have settled snug little colonies of ranching immigrants from Wales, from England, from Germany, from Dutch South Africa, unassimilated and hugging the emblems—the solid mahogany, the teapots, the flowering shrubs, the sporting prints—of their native hearths, which they expect never to see again. A country, in brief, of castaways.

Bruce Chatwin is the latest inheritor of the British travel-writing tradition, but his art is of such a style and his succeeding work, *The Viceroy of Ouidah* (1980), is so inventively elaborated that the nature of his future contribution to literature is not to be too categorically decided. Meanwhile:

> Using an old Winchester, the barber had put a bullet through his right temple. With reflexes still functioning he had fired a second shot which missed and hit a calendar of the local glacier. The chair swivelled to the left and the body slumped sideways to the floor. His fish-eyes gaped glassily at the ceiling. A pool of blood lay on the blue linoleum. Blood had clotted on his steely Indian-stiff hair.

Immaculate and dispassionate, Chatwin's prose gives you the style of a death or the taste and view of a moment in a few incandescent phrases. He has put every paragraph to the acid test, seeing how many words he could eliminate, retaining the minimal number to make that paragraph tell a story or paint a picture. His sense of the macabre is acute and his eye for color is as sharp as Theroux's nose for odor.

> At the water's edge oyster-catchers were needling for shellfish in piles of ruby-colored seaweed. The coast of Tierra del Fuego was an ashy stripe less than two miles away. . . . Three ancient Scots stood by. Their eyes were bloodshot-pink and nursery-blue and their teeth were worn to little brown pinnacles.
>
> The tenant of the Estancia Paso Roballos was a Canary Islander from Teneriffe. He sat in a pink-washed kitchen, where a black clock hammered out the hours and his wife spooned rhubarb jam into

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her mouth. The house was all passage and unused rooms. In the salon a settee flaked patches of gilding to the floor. The optimistic plumbing of half a century had collapsed and reeked of ammonia. . . . Hailstones battered the currant bushes of the garden.

On the penultimate page of this terse history of a country that often sounds as if it had been contrived, not ever sighted, Chatwin inserts, without preface or aftermath, an anecdote that seems to me an entirely fitting close for my essay.

There is a man in Punta Arenas, dreams pine forests, hums Lieder, wakes each morning and sees the black strait. He drives to a factory that smells of the sea. All about him are scarlet crabs, crawling, then steaming. He hears the shells crack and the claws breaking, sees the sweet white flesh packed firm in metal cans. He is an efficient man, with some previous experience of the production line. Does he remember that other smell, of burning? And that other sound, of low voices singing? And the piles of hair cast away as the claws of crabs?

Herman Rauff is credited with the invention and administration of the Mobile Gas Oven.

The tip of a continent; the sunset of an era; the end of the voyage.

Athelney

C. H. Sisson

The apple trees are dulled in the red sun,
The fruit unpolished and the day is done.
This is where Alfred crept by on his marsh,
Wet straggling country still, but now the harsh
Road runs on blue and dark beside his ghost.
Headlamps begin to count the sodden posts
And catch a nosing heifer here and there.
The squawking ducks are home, and the wet air
Settles more heavily as the night comes.
'A bit of fire-stuff like': a voice close by
And a dead branch is dragged to Athelney.

✪ C. H. SISSON, an editor of the British journal *Poetry Nation Review*, is the author of *In the Trojan Ditch* (collected poems and selected translations), *The Avoidance of Literature* (collected essays), and *The Divine Comedy of Dante* (verse translation).

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Tortoiseshell

(*For Ed Dorn*)

DONALD DAVIE

Nothing but rules of thumb
Ever! I perceive
The need for a rule more golden
Beginning: "Poetry is . . ."
But I was never at home
With generalities.

And going by rules of thumb,
Which ought to be humble, seems
Oracular rather, a voice
Uttering *arcanum*;
Presumptuous, as if one
Boasted a golden thumb.

Artificer, not artist,
Pretends to the golden thumb;
The English carver, enacting
The new Perpendicular Style
Greeted it, I suspect, with
A crooked treacherous smile.

Does his every exactly rendered
Cusp not grudge the enormous
Access of confidence in
His architect? I go
Resentfully along with
Your self-possession, so;

As it might be an ancient tortoise,
Because his grandsire's quaint
Slouch-hatted or pie-crust shell
Supplied the sounding frame
Behind Apollo's string,
Should think his was the fame.

DONALD DAVIE, professor of English at Vanderbilt University, is the author of *Articulate Energy: An Inquiry into the Syntax of English Poetry*. His *Collected Poems* was published in 1972.

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Ariosto

Less Is More

ROBERT M. ADAMS

Nobody gets less chance to read books for pleasure, all the way through, for their own sakes, than a professor of literature. The myth, of course, is quite different. The professor is supposed to sit in his study, placidly reading one Great Book after another, sipping and sampling and passing judgment, like a wine connoisseur with an infinite cellar and infinite time at his disposal. Hardly so, hardly so at all. His reading is really done by way of preparing for a class, criticizing a paper, advising on a thesis, or writing a paper of his own; his time is divided into five- and ten-minute snippets by conferences, phone calls, meetings. It's a rare and special pleasure when he gets to sit down and read a long, important book all the way through, for its own sake, for pleasure—as I have just finished reading the *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto.

I read it, in the first place, out of curiosity—of all motives the most proper for picking up a volume, not to speak of four. I read it in the original tongue, which I understand only imperfectly, and I read it without recourse to a dictionary, finding that sometimes the general sense of a passage sufficed for my purposes, and that when it did not I could generally decipher a difficult stanza by reading it over and over. I read the poem from beginning to end, beguiled—as I fancy Ariosto's original readers must have been—by a simpleminded itch to learn what happened next, what concatenation of events would resolve the various problems confronting the poet's characters. I had no loftier purposes in mind, none more immediate than the improvement of my understanding. The present essay is a retrospective rearrangement of experiences that took shape before it, the essay, was so much as thought of.

About the author himself I knew, and cared to know, no more than the basic commonplaces. His life straddled the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; he spent most of it, to no great material advantage, at the court of the Este family in Ferrara. Cardinal Ippolito and Duke Alfonso, unlike their splendid predecessors Dukes Borso and Ercole, were niggardly patrons and ungenerous employers. Ariosto got meager wages and little appreciation; much was asked of him in hard and uncongenial work. He might have done better by entering the church, but shrank from the idea of a long-term commitment. Messer Ludovico was also a great favorite with the ladies, but here too he wanted no long-term commitments and married only toward the end of his life (he died in 1533, not yet sixty years of age). A first version of the *Orlando Furioso* was published in 1516, but Ariosto was revising it for a new edition as late as 1532. His poem follows previous tellings and retellings of the Charlemagne legends in Italy and France, especially a burlesque version by Luigi Pulci (*Morgante Maggiore*, 1483) and a more serious but also clumsier treatment by Matteo Boiardo (*Orlando Innamorato*, 1495). Despite the problems of translation into languages less rich in rhymes than Italian, *Orlando Furioso* was an immediate success, continent wide. Things Italian were, for many provincial societies like England, the absolute acme of the suave and worldly. Books were just starting to be published in large numbers and at reasonable prices; the *Or-*

ROBERT M. ADAMS is the author of *Bad Mouth: Fugitive Papers on the Dark Side* and, most recently, *The Lost Museum: Glimpses of Vanished Originals*.

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lando Furioso traveled on the wings of scandal higher and faster than more weighty tomes, and in the end perhaps just as far.

Orlando Furioso, I discovered without much surprise, is a very sophisticated poem; that is, it doesn't take its ostensible themes very seriously, and the interplay of its levities (translated for the reader into a search for the center of gravity) is half the pleasure of reading it. On the official level, the central action is Charlemagne's defense of Paris (therefore of France, Western civilization, and Christian culture at large) against the Saracens. This is the largest political and social action in the poem; Orlando's madness is important chiefly because it prevents him from taking part in the crucial conflict. But Ariosto quickly makes it clear that he isn't going to give the historical action very much weight. For long periods he departs altogether from the story of Charlemagne and the siege of Paris. There's one tremendous scene of assault and defense, but mostly the campaigns on both sides are left to take care of themselves. This isn't simply because big battalions are poetically cumbersome; it's also because there isn't a great deal of operational difference between Christians and Saracens; they all act in very much the same way and, with a few exceptions, share the same values. The Saracens do indeed include some heavies like Rodomonte, and it is taken for granted that they are in religious error; but this in no way implies that they are not perfect gentlemen. The conflict is not, therefore, between good and evil, not even between very good and pretty good; it is not even a real conflict; it is a game with occasionally fatal consequences. An incident at the very beginning of the poem seems designed to underline these equivalences. Rinaldo and Ferrau—the one a Christian, the other a Saracen—are madly in love with Angelica, the wandering daughter of the King of Circassia. She is so staggeringly seductive that it's not clear what religion she professes, if any. All such secondary considerations disappear in the blinding radiance of her desirability. But she is a girl with a mind of her own. She doesn't like either Rinaldo or Ferrau, and when they begin to fight over her, she takes advantage of their distraction to run away from them both. Observing her departure after a time, they adjourn their fight and set out to seek the lady collaboratively, with the understanding that when they have found her they will go back to fighting again. Ariosto vigorously approves of this behavior, and says so in a famous passage of direct editorializing: "O gran bontà de' cavalieri antiqui!" The knights were of different religious faiths, rivals in love, and inflamed by rage; yet they sank all these differences in recognition of a common code of chivalrous conduct.

Well and good, then. The generous conduct commended by a code of honor carries high value in the poem—a higher value, it sometimes appears, than the defense of Charlemagne, France, Western civilization, and Christian culture. The emperor's difficulties arise in large part from the tendency of his best paladins to go wandering off across Europe, Asia, and Africa (not to mention the moon) in the pursuit of private feuds. These feuds are not simply petty quarrels; they are the international game of knight-errantry itself, which is played by its own rules and carries its own, largely intangible, rewards. One can't, one simply can't, leave a slight or insult unavenged or a challenge unanswered; the more terrifying the danger with which one is confronted, the more peremptory is one's obligation to march straight up to it. Ariosto is not without a mocking eye for some of the absurdities to which this code gives rise. A group of heroes and heroines gets involved, on one occasion, in a round robin of challenges from which only a legal mind can extricate them by deciding who fights whom first. On the other hand, he clearly admires the refusal of one knight to accept unfair odds against another—the extravagant meticulousness of this moral bookkeeping, in which so many of the accounts can only be entered in blood. But there is a major exception to the rule of fair play, which throws the whole sheet out of balance. Any sort of magic influence one possesses (and there are many sorts) can be fairly used against an opponent. Thus if one has a magic spear or sword, one can triumph over opponents whose inherent ability is much greater. Ariosto accepts this circumstance without criticism, though it unbalances the whole chivalric game, and renders dubious the meaning of its basically intangible rewards.

A second and still more striking illogicality in Ariosto's presentation of the chivalric code involves the ladies. Much of the fight-

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ing is ostensibly intended to impress them; it is performed in their "service." When the knight has triumphantly defeated all the dragons placed in his way by fate or by his own sense of duty, it is the lady who bestows on him his reward—that is, naturally, her self. But in the story, things don't work out this way. Ruggiero—who must pass all sorts of difficult tests to win the hand of Bradamante, so that he may beget upon her the whole splendid house of Este—goes wandering off after so many foreign adventures that one suspects (with Bradamante) that he isn't much interested in her at all. And indeed she's a dull, dutiful lady with rather too strong a sense of her social position to be much fun. More strikingly still, Orlando's heroic deeds totally fail to impress Angelica. He is her devoted slave; he asks nothing better than the chance to hew armies to pieces in her service. But his sullen, lonely prowess makes no more impression on her than did that of Rinaldo and Ferrau; though she's been actively solicited by princes, belligerent barons, and heroes of every degree of heroism, she is unimpressed by any of them. Indeed, she uses them as convenience suggests, to get herself out of various scrapes, but she has no intention of "rewarding" any of these Nice Men for their service. Out of mere natural impulse, she goes instead to the simple Saracen youth, Medoro, who is wounded, pathetic, uselessly brave, and who learns to adore her. Thus the most attractive girl on stage, who is responsible for Orlando's madness and who thereby provides the main dramatic force of the poem, wanders out of it before the action is half completed, without doing anything to reward intrepidity or endorse chivalric values.

An episode of this nature could be given grotesque or tragic or cynical or didactic or absurdist coloring; it has no preordained tonality. Ariosto's handling of it is therefore of great interest; and the fact is that he refracts it, divides it into several different emotional components. When he is dealing with Orlando, in the madness which comes on him when he knows that Angelica is lost forever, the note is of pathos, mixed with a kind of terrible comedy. Orlando mad is a great hairy, naked, bestial creature who murders and ravages at random—he is superhuman strength and absolute invulnerability run wild. On the other hand, Angelica's idyll with Medoro is an exquisite pastoral. If one feels, watching Orlando, that love is a torment and a madness, one sees, with Angelica and Medoro, that it is a world of delicate delight. In refusing to play the chivalric game, in neglecting "merito," Angelica is either brutally cruel to Orlando or else she shows miraculous good sense; she's either above the rules of the courtly love game or beneath them. When, in canto 42, Rinaldo unexpectedly decides to seek out and punish the lady, he encounters the monster Jealousy, from whom he is rescued (in one of the occasional explicit allegories of the poem) by Disdain (Sdegno). But disdain isn't in the least what one feels for Angelica as she makes her perilous way back across Europe with Medoro, whom she is going to make King of Circassia. She has got exactly what she wants, and she doesn't have Orlando, whom she doesn't in the least want: his style of love isn't in fact what she either desires or deserves. There's a terrible ambiguous instance of this perception in the poem, when Orlando, seeking Angelica, captures her mare instead. He gallops off on the poor creature, rides it to death, and then struggles on, carrying the dead beast on his shoulders or dragging it behind him. This is passion all right, but horrifying, ghastly; Ariosto says he wishes Orlando had captured Angelica herself, so he could treat her in this way, but clearly he means the direct contrary, and we so understand him. Angelica creates her own nobility. Being Queen of the May with Medoro, she would be abasing herself by associating with a mere paladin—by accepting, for example, all the tedium and ceremony that attend the wedding of Ruggiero and Bradamante. In the world she has made she is free; in the world of "merit" and "honor" she would be bound. Ariosto rejoices in her escape, even as he pretends to deplore it.

One passage of broad fun and one of slightly subtler irony make this point pretty clear. When Astolfo goes to the moon and brings back Orlando's wits in a large jar, the episode culminates in a scene where the mad paladin has to be hog-tied and forced to snuffle up his brains again from the jar held under his nose. His madness has been terrible, but it is resolved in a guffaw; he really is a pretty coarse piece of machinery after all. And the balance of feeling is similarly tilted against Orlando in

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a mock-heroic apostrophe delivered when Angelica has just persuaded Medoro to take her virginity:

> O conte Orlando, o re di Circassia,
> vostra inclita virtù, dite, che giova?
> Vostro alto onor dite in che prezzo sia,
> o che mercé vostro servir ritruova.

"Tell me what good it did you, this virtue, honor, service, of which you talk so much?" The poet has to beseech his own characters to make sense of their beliefs (the implication is clear that he himself can't); and in joining Orlando with Angelica's father, the King of Circassia, he sets them and their conservative views against the "povero fante" whom he's really delighted to see carrying off the prize.

On a somewhat wider level of abstraction, spiritual freedom and physical mobility do indeed seem to be values that Ariosto takes seriously and views favorably. His characters career around the fringes of the civilized world like frantic water beetles; and the poet rejoices, just as much as they do, in their activity. They are to be found in the Orkney Islands and the Scottish Highlands; they are active in India, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Galicia, Hangchow, and North Africa, as well as up and down the Italian and Hispanic peninsulas. Quirky Astolfo, just back from the moon, musters an army of Nubians and marches to attack Bizerte; himself an Englishman, he is aided by Dudone, a paladin from Denmark. Plebeian practical considerations, like the language to be spoken or the money to be put down for food and lodging, never impede these impetuous voyagers. They travel from one end of Europe to the other on a whim, a fancy; they go off in search of one another without having the faintest notion of where to look. Their errant travels give rise to very little extended description of specific scenery. Things pick up a little in this respect when we get into the near neighborhood of Ferrara, but for the most part it seems that the names of remote places and their mythological or genealogical resonance are what attract Ariosto. Spenser's characters, traveling through Faeryland, find themselves always in the same place or in interchangeable places; their allegorical significance determines that they will never find themselves in circumstances that don't test that significance. But Ariosto's people inhabit a real Europe, and when they go from one part of it to another the scene really changes; it isn't just "another part of the forest." Apart from tangible space, they live also in real historical time, enabled by elaborate prophecy to move forward from the era of Charlemagne just as far as Ariosto's own historical hindsight will take them. And in the other direction, they seem to inhabit a world that, for some reason inherent in its construction, constantly repeats scarcely disguised episodes from the major Greek and Roman epics.

A particularly intrusive feature of the poem is Ariosto's frequent and apparently random adaptation of narrative units prefabricated for his imitation by the classical poets and mythologists. Ruggiero, in possession (though only imperfect control) of the hippogriff, uses it to rescue Angelica from the orc, precisely as Perseus, borne on winged sandals, rescued Andromeda from the sea monster. Astolfo liberates Senapo from the torment of the harpies, just as Phineas was liberated from harpies by the Argonauts. The story of Bireno and Olimpia in canto 10 exactly repeats that of Theseus and Ariadne; the story of Norandino and the orc in canto 17 parallels that of Ulysses and his companions in the cave of Polyphemus; the night foray of Cloridan and Medoro in canto 18 recalls that of Ulysses and Diomede in the *Iliad*, or Nisus and Euryalus in the *Aeneid*. This list, which could be greatly extended, fairly represents the scrappy and occasional nature of Ariosto's imitation. He isn't challenging comparison with the classics any more than he's satirizing them or his characters or himself; he isn't at all using them as a crutch to sustain his lame invention. His motive, which he does nothing whatever to define or explain, is probably nothing deeper than a sense of play. He knows that the stories he repeats are old and familiar in the mind of his audience. His whole narration is grafted onto that of Boiardo, who drew on immemorial legends, and he anticipates the nudge and smile of recognition. They were good stories the first time around—very well, they'll probably be even better the second time. Part of Ariosto's strategy is clearly to tell his story in a playful and disorderly way, which keeps his readers off balance; the texture at which he is aiming is purposely crazy quilt. One quickly gets used to his interweaving of themes, the

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serial technique by which he brings hero A to the verge of a new adventure, then leaves him poised there while he picks up with heroine X for fifty or a hundred stanzas.

Ariosto repeatedly appears before the reader to explain what he is doing in the poem—why he is stopping one story and starting another. After a large, long battle, he complains that his voice is getting a bit "rauco." He talks to his patron; he explains to his readers, especially the ladies, that just because he tells stories about bad ladies, he doesn't necessarily think they're all bad. He hints very broadly at his own ill fortune in love, he soliloquizes and explains. And in a climactic canto near the end of the poem, as he navigates his poetic bark toward the welcome shore, he greets in circumstantial detail all the friends and acquaintances whom he imagines to be greeting him. It is a poem, therefore, in which Ariosto himself bulks large; apart from his tangible appearances before the reader, the poet maintains persistent control over the materials of the poem, and exercises it to keep things in motion. He doesn't, ordinarily, call explicit attention to himself by name or as "I," but he manipulates the materials of his poem vigorously, and there's rarely a moment when one isn't aware of his doing so. The lament of Angelica in canto 8 is a showcase for Ariosto's own artful rhetoric; Astolfo's return from the moon with Orlando's wits reminds the poet (canto 35) of his own amorous distractions. He even turns the events of his story to the purposes of a satire, which is completely extraneous to their nature: when Michael wants to find Discord and use her to sow confusion in the ranks of the Saracens, he looks for her in the wrong place and only discovers her in the monasteries. Directly and indirectly, in a variety of ways, the poet makes his voice heard behind the dramatic occasion. For it's *his* fantasy that the poem is creating, *his* world through which the half-transparent figures move. Among these figures, Astolfo and Angelica are the most capacious vessels of Ariosto's humor. Both are generously supplied with implements of magic, which they use to tease or ridicule or amaze the other figures, not to speak of the reader. Indeed, the poem describes more workaday forms or uses or users of magic; Bradamante, for example, does nothing with her enchanted spear but knock other knights from the saddle. But the preeminent wielders of magic are particularly gay and impudent spirits, and their special representative is Angelica. She doesn't want to be tied down. She enjoys being fought over and rescued, but feels no obligation whatever toward her rescuers. Giving a girl like this a ring that makes her invisible every time she slips it between her rosy lips is just asking for mischief. "Malice" would be too strong a word for her motivation, "play" too weak. The lady is amused by knights, perhaps a trifle contemptuous of them, but she's not to be cross-examined on her little whims. She does as she pleases. In this unstable mixture of levity, cruelty, and utmost desirability, Angelica nicely reflects Ariosto's views about sexual love as well as the tantalizing complex of attitudes that he puts forward, in his own person or through the agency of his story, on this oldest of topics.

It's useless, of course, to look for a "doctrine" or erotic "code" in the *Orlando Furioso*—useless and foolish. For the poet obviously delights in assuming a farrago of conventional, and often incompatible, attitudes toward the female sex. He has interpolated long and very funny fabliaux into the body of his poem, demonstrating that women are universally and uncontrollably promiscuous (cantos 27 and 28). He denounces them as ingrates, neglectful of "merito" in their lovers, and indifferent to anything but money. On the other hand (and there's always another hand when one considers Ariosto's attitude toward women), he can't speak highly enough of "cortesi donne," wherever and whenever they are found. He thinks the better of them, indeed, because they are so rare. He's been in love himself, he reminds us, and though very ill-used by his lady, he still worships her. In fact, it's only because he is, like Orlando, mad for love that he writes such evil things about women; he doesn't really mean what he says, and deserves pardon and pity just as much as the paladin. In a slippery way, Orlando's madness, which is an exaggerated form of everyone's madness—hardly a lover in the poem, except perhaps Bradamante, isn't crazy in one degree or another—can easily be equated with the poet's fantasy if one wants it to be. Of course, this self-

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defeating equation does or can imply that the poem undermines itself, and any solemn effort to "rationalize" it can be cut short by the assertion that the author is, after all, mad—whether with *furor* or *afflatus* it's up to the reader to say. What Ariosto is playing throughout, in other words, is a familiar game, whose oldest and best name is "Keep 'em guessing." In this context, too, we could speak of "refraction"; the poet doesn't try to harmonize or coordinate the various strains of his erotic or poetic feeling, but breaks them up and uses them in his poem opportunistically, sophistically, as occasion suits.

What I have sketched above is the rough outline of a first, unmethodologized response to reading Ariosto. It hasn't yet risen to the status of a thesis about Ariosto, for it simply describes what certain facets of the reading experience feel like when the poem is seen from a certain by no means esoteric point of view. It's the kind of thing you fall back on when you face the fact that you enjoyed reading a book, and start asking yourself the simple, impossible question, Why? To account for your own pleasure or to entice someone else into undertaking the book you might use some of these considerations: the irreverent playfulness of the poet with regard to himself and his "characters" (but they're really only figures, outlines); the extravagant range of his imagination and the oceanic variety of his riant versification (which I haven't mentioned so far). And of course this simple, direct, uncontaminated experience of the poem is at least half of what goes into the making of a scholarly thesis.

Right here we get into what is fashionably called a problematic. I say "of course" our innocent experience of a poem enters into the thesis we form concerning it, but there's no "of course" about it. The new style in these things is to grant a lot more autonomy to the thesis, and to the theoretical structure within which it fits, than to the mere brute experience to which it is supposed to apply. What one sees by looking with innocent eyes at the surface of a poem is precisely nothing. The eye must be informed by a hypothesis of some character before it can discover specific shapes, and the specific shapes by which it verifies the hypothesis are themselves shaped by that hypothesis. This procedure sometimes gives those of us who were reared in the positivist tradition the uneasy sense of an elaborate and ingeniously structured house floating in midair, without any foundations in experience. From one point of view, it represents the complete emancipation of criticism from its bondage to the past: the original text. Criticism really becomes, as it is occasionally claimed to be, an autochthonous art to which the actual poem or novel, the ostensible "subject" of the criticism, is wholly subordinate. The question is no longer, How can the critic illuminate his text? but, In what ways can the text be made to serve the exfoliation of the criticism?

Though these accents suggest a sturdy, commonsense preference for the ancient text over the modern commentary, I don't want to prejudice the question, or to overstate it. Probably it is true that an absolutely innocent eye would see nothing whatever in the *Orlando Furioso*—but hardly any of us are that innocent. Simply from the cultural heritage, we know a hodgepodge of miscellaneous things—true and false, relevant and irrelevant—about literature, Italian literature, chivalry, the Renaissance, the epic, the romance, and Ariosto. One can argue that this patchwork intellectual grid is enough to admit us to a preliminary reading of the poem—when our experience of it (such as it can be, given our primitive theoretical machinery) will enable us partially to correct and elaborate our conceptions. But alternatively, taking ourselves as we really are and recognizing ourselves as children of our century, we can come to the clearest possible philosophic recognition of our condition and the forces that have created it, and read Ariosto for such values as are compatible with that knowledge. Very likely we do both these things, alternately or simultaneously, especially if we're professional readers, whose days are curiously divided between the sixteenth or seventeenth and the twentieth centuries. We control our reading of Ariosto by the being we ineluctably possess in the year 1981, the framework of our several languages, the values of our age. We adapt our indigenous twentieth-century values and expectations to the reading of a Renaissance poem—understanding, by some sort of indefinable cultural tact, that there are parts of any such poem with which we simply can't quarrel, however alien they may be, and

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also parts of our selves to which we simply can't expect any Renaissance poet to answer. If we are good readers of Ariosto, we bring to his poem some critical concepts learned from reading Proust or Henry James—as a result of which it's unashamedly a different poem for us than it was for any Renaissance reader. (And indeed I think it an inevitable fraud for anyone to pretend to be a Renaissance reader when he has to put off half his indefeasible personality in the process.) On the other hand, much of the art of reading involves tuning oneself to receive tonalities and harmonies other than those for which one's limited personal circumstances have prepared one.

I've thus set up a dialectic within my reader's mind—or, to speak less pretentiously, a mutual relation between reader and poem—whereby each profits from the peculiar features of the other, while at the same time acting to modify them. And I'm emboldened to try such a formula because Ariosto seems to me the very type of author with whom these balanced ambiguities may be fruitful. He is an author, not of his own time, but of a time long before his own; he uses his modern levities to deride outworn pieties that he uses to show up modern levity. Being so ironic and unsystematic himself, so dependent on a tone that indefinably levitates him over absurdities and lapses and longueurs, he hasn't attracted the attention of many systematic critics—whether Marxian, existentialist, archetypal, or what have you. There have been a good many studies of Ariosto, generally directed toward defining the degree and kind of unity to be sought in the poem. But even in Italian, local annotation and explication are the prevalent, the overwhelming modes of Ariosto criticism. Ariosto hasn't become the sort of testing ground for trying out general critical approaches and methodologies that Milton has been—or Spenser.

Take the little matter of allegory, over which the Spenser people have blown up such a storm. A child can see that there are allegories here and there in *Orlando Furioso*; only a nincompoop would try to read the whole poem as an extended allegory. If we dealt with a sage and serious moral author whose work was or might conceivably be threaded on a single didactic theme, there would certainly be many problems with the poem as it exists. But figures such as Logistilla, Discord, Disdain, Jealousy, and Silence are so intermittent, they surrender their positions in the poem so readily to elements of farce, bawdry, or adventure, that there's no way of weaving them into one allegory or of making that one allegory a structural framework for the poem.

The central difficulty with Milton's major poetry plainly involves an allocation of sympathy. Like Comus, Satan seems to have all the best lines, while the voice of ostensible Good is, by contrast, prudish or priggish or coldly legalistic. (I paraphrase here in capsule or caricature form an argument that anyone familiar with Milton criticism can fill out for himself.) But in Ariosto there's no shadow of such a problem. Orlando is a very curious hero, and the erotic difficulties of Bradamante and Ruggiero are drawn out to such lengths that taking their story seriously is pretty much out of the question. But the poem is loose-jointed and episodic by nature; instead of focusing on a hero and heroine, it allows a whole company of players to act out their different parts, and sometimes gives them all a vacation while it wanders off into a narrative digression. Our sympathy is often divided, and generally tinged with irony; but as that's the general character of Ariosto's world, as nobody is altogether exempt from Ariosto's laughter, and as the Christians do win out unequivocally in the end (Agramante and Rodomonte being permanently dead), there's just no problem in Ariosto analogous to those that Milton raises in the minds of his readers.

I won't say there are no living critical problems at all in Ariosto; but what problems there are call for very delicate preliminary definitions, and the sort of exegetical tools that are current simply won't capture the poem's fine particularities. The investment of erudition is self-defeating; the attempt to define a structure is futile when the very notion of structure can dissolve in private fantasy at any moment. The poem's subtleties define themselves in terms of the regularities they decline; thus they're hard, if not impossible, to formulate in academic diction. Reading a book like Ariosto's, which was intended for a courtly audience but built on fairy tales and balladmongers' romances, makes us aware of certain limitations in the critical enterprise itself—certain latent implications about the power and character of rational academic discourse.

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Just by being what it is—consecutive, responsible, limited to the study of a definite verbal text whose coherence would be compromised by introducing nonverbal elements like social gestures—it may close itself off from important elements of an art like Ariosto's. I think I see elements of an art like Ariosto's in other works of literature touched by the spirit of a court for which the discursive virtues may have seemed a bit common. Consider, for example, the late comic romances of Shakespeare—the way Autolycus saunters in and out of *A Winter's Tale*, or that delightfully idle game of chess with which Ferdinand and Miranda are allowed to entertain themselves during the last two acts of *The Tempest*. Or note the pervasive "silliness" and "incoherence" (as we're easily tempted to call it) of the Jacobean masque; even Ben Jonson, that solid man, may be caught up in the poetry of the incomplete gesture, the negligent nonrendering, the absurdity joyously overlooked.

Shamed out of the formal pomp and stiff categories of his pedantic art, the critic who scorns to make his own wordplay the theme of his writing falls back perforce on superficial, belletristic characterizations. He says the poem is an iridescent, ironic texture of allusions and implications; he calls it a poised and precarious equilibrium of irony and sentiment—that sort of thing. Of course no self-respecting critic can write this way anymore without elaborate reservations and disclaimers. I know perfectly well that I've said nothing about *Orlando Furioso* in my essay that wasn't already commonplace at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The poem, in fact, does not lend itself to anything but reading. It is not suitable for anything but enjoyment, like sundry other things in life that the reader may specify for himself. But without public advertisement in the form of prestidigitating critics, and without foreign-language programs capable of making Ariosto available in the original, the poet has largely ceased to exist for an Anglo-Saxon culture. Since Sir John Harington's free and easy rendering in Elizabeth's time (he had to do it in penance for his own too free and easy ways around court), there has been just one translation into the original meter: that by William S. Rose, which dates from 1831. After a long career in Bohn's Illustrated Library and a reprint by Bobbs-Merrill, Rose's is still the only going translation. More recently there have been prose versions, some of which at least could have no conceivable effect except to wall off potential readers of Ariosto from attempting the poem, ever, under any circumstances. As for the critical introductions, they have all been made. Sometimes the trite opinions actually sound like novelties because, along with the poet, all his commentators and exegetes have become obsolete as well. Is it that, if we can't read a poem "professionally" in order to make a demonstration or a problematic out of it, we don't want to read it at all? This would be a shame if it were so, for all the care lavished on the text may blind us precisely to the effects of carelessness—*insouciance*, in the more elegant French. If the author is an actor in a theater wider and more luminous than that of his art, a theater to which he deliberately and provocatively withdraws, how shall we talk of his presence when all we are left with is a sense of shimmering absence? Talking about these graces of the spirit requires a mode, not only of speech but of sensation beyond reach of the scholastic disciplines—though not, I'm sure, beyond the intuitions of some sort of art.

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Solo-Singing at Temple Knesseth Israel

Edward Brash

When my piercing boy's soprano
gained the rooftop of its range
without embarrassment and
the assistant organist
knit chords beneath me
like authority, I got
to feeling good
about religion. A weak-eyed member
of the congregation might
have missed my presence in
the pulpit altogether so
small a fraction of its ministerial
volume could I fill, but
others used the word angelic
to describe the piety
of my delivery, and
golden hair, if not
my vocal gifts. Well, artistry
or something so close to it
you ignore the
separation happened that lost
Saturday in ancient
May. It reminded
grown men of the time
when a professional

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cellist played Kol
Nidrei and of their own vaporized
youth. I stayed in love
with God until the echo
of the organ died and
the most boring voice to graduate
from rabbinic college led
prayers like small
hammer blows. Rapture
went out of the room
through those holes. If only
he had let the tender
non-applause—as if
they threw invisible
bouquets at me—continue
moments longer . . .
but this was a
historian and not a judge of souls.

✪ EDWARD BRASH, an editor at Time-Life Books, has had poetry published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Poetry*, *Partisan Review*, and other journals.

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Thoughts on Being Twayned

ALBERT HALPER

The postman making his rounds in his station wagon stopped at the mailbox down the hill; the lid of the box clicked as he deposited the day's offerings. I walked down the driveway and, among the day's junk mail, I picked out a slim volume and found that I was now number 352 in the Twayne United States Authors Series. I was pleased but also surprised to get the book, because the author, John E. Hart, had been working on his study of me for several years, and his letters to me had stopped quite a while before.

Returning to the house, I began to read the mandatory chronology of number 352 in the series. Professor Hart mentioned the correct date of my birth, followed by the names of my parents, my early schooling, all the jobs I had had (the deadening and the interesting ones alike); the title of my utterly forgotten, privately printed little book of mawkish poems, which I had paid for while working in a Chicago electrotype foundry; my first story accepted by Marianne Moore, then editor of the old *Dial*, while I was working on the night shift of the main Chicago post office; my departure for New York, "to become a writer"; the dates of my publications; and my two marriages, my literary friendships, and so on. What intrigued me were additional items concerning my past—facts I had almost forgotten—that I assume John Hart had had access to in my government file in Washington, under the Freedom of Information Act. I felt no ill will toward Hart for divulging this extra information about my past, which dealt with the usual activities of many writers during the hectic 1930s.

That afternoon I read through Hart's honest, sympathetic, carefully researched book about me. Afterward, old memories began to flow. I recalled William Faulkner's well-known comment, "A book is the writer's secret life." I hadn't really deeply analyzed that statement before; of course, by book, he meant a writer's oeuvre, and I supposed he meant, especially, the work of a writer of fiction. I wondered what other writers had thought of Faulkner's remark.

Then, suddenly, while holding Twayne volume 352 in my lap, I recalled the Negro spiritual that William March sang to a couple of writers and myself when I lived in London during the thirties. March sang it after we had talked ourselves hoarse about literature and what its aims should be. Bill March sang the song wickedly yet gleefully; he's long dead now, but I vividly remember his grin as he recited the words.

> My lord is so high, you can't go over him,
> My lord is so wide, you can't go 'round him,
> My lord is so deep, you can't go under him,
> You must come in at the door.

As March, a southerner, delivered the words teasingly, we three younger writers listened intently. We knew, of course, what that spiritual meant to us personally. Its meaning shook me at the time. The other two listeners also appeared somewhat shaken. And then, years later, I came across Faulkner's remark.

While holding volume 352 in my lap, I thought of the writers whose work I cared most about—Chekhov, Joyce, Hamsun, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Isaac Babel, Orwell, and others—and wondered whether their books revealed their inner secret lives to readers. I began to doubt it. Wasn't it only when Fitzgerald's posthumously published book, *The*

ALBERT HALPER's books include the novels *Union Square*, *The Foundry*, and *The Chute* and his memoir *Good-Bye, Union Square*.

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Crack-Up, edited by Edmund Wilson, appeared that readers became acquainted with the agonies of Fitzgerald's secret life? I don't mean his drinking problem. I refer to a key statement found after his death in one of his notebooks: "I wish now I'd *never* relaxed or looked back—but said at the end of *The Great Gatsby*: 'I've found my line—from now on this comes first. This is my immediate duty—without this I am nothing.' " This, I think, was Fitzgerald's hidden wound, the terrible, gnawing feeling of remorse that he carried around with him to the end because of the second-rate short stories he produced in order to live the good life.

And I remembered a little Chekhov volume I had picked up in London published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press, *The Note-Books of Anton Tchekhov* (never published in the United States). I had pored over the contents of that slender volume many times, admiring Chekhov's brief entries about characters and acquaintances, and notes for plots for stories he had not yet worked up. But though these entries were laced with Chekhov's personal warmth and penetrating understanding, they had failed to reveal Chekhov's secret life to me. It was only later, when his collected letters were published after his death, and his lonely marriage to a young, aspiring actress became known, that his secret life surfaced, at least to this reader.

And what about Faulkner himself, I wondered, as his remark continued to tease me. Didn't we have to wait until his death before we learned he had been a part-time alcoholic who went on terrible binges, locking himself up in a barn on his property with enough booze to last for days? Have we ever learned the reason for his excessive drinking—his private secret? I don't think we have.

Well, I finally decided, Faulkner was wrong. His famous remark about writers was too pat, and I wouldn't take it too seriously from now on. Yet somehow it continued to bother me, and I remembered the questionnaire that had arrived in the mail a few weeks before, requesting me to fill out a lengthy form sent by one of the many who's-who publishers, seeking information for their latest volume on Midwest authors. I was asked to list my credits and, among other information, the names of writers who I thought had influenced my work. The final question printed in the form was a simple inquiry: "Why do you write?" For a moment I considered destroying the questionnaire. Then I noticed the second sheet that had arrived with the questionnaire, listing earlier replies to the request sent in by various authors. I started to read their statements. Many were a bit embarrassing, I thought, especially those replies describing, in autobiographical detail, a desire to contribute to the body of serious American literature as well as a hope to impress upon readers certain crucial ideas the authors wished to convey.

I remembered that during the thirties a similar request had been sent to prominent European authors, also asking, "Why do you write?" I wondered if the publishers of *Who's Who in the Midwest* had been cognizant of it. A sum of money was to be paid for the winning reply. Many well-known writers, among them several Nobel Prize winners, took part. Most of the replies, I recalled, had been disappointing and on the lengthy side; some of them had been pompous and well-watered with self-serving phrases. To almost everyone's surprise, Knut Hamsun's reply won the prize. His brief statement read: "I write to kill time." His answer thrilled me. I never forgot it.

I yearned to use Knut Hamsun's wonderful reply on my questionnaire, but of course that would be dishonest. Certainly for me it would. I mused about a good reply of my own for a long moment and at last typed: "I write because I must." These words left me with a dull sense of failure, but they were the best I could come up with at the time. A day after I sent my questionnaire to the publisher, I felt that my reply to the last question had been smug, a bit fake heroic. I thought of a better reply. "I write because I write because I write because I write." That certainly sounded better. It made me think of Gertrude Stein, of course. I didn't mail it in, though. I let my original reply stand.

With Twayne's volume number 352 still resting in my lap, I began thinking of my initial literary efforts. I remember the thrill I felt when, still a young man living in Chicago, I first read Sherwood Anderson's short stories. His work split me wide open. I wrote to him—my first and only fan letter to a writer—while working nights in the post office. To my joy, he answered with a wonderful letter. At that

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time my reaction to Anderson's writing was not unique; many young writers had come under his influence—Hemingway, Faulkner, Saroyan, Caldwell, and others. Today Sherwood Anderson's reputation has faded somewhat, yet some of his influence still hovers like a shadow over much of the prose written by young writers during the twenties and early thirties. Hemingway, Anderson's pupil and heir, took over the reins. Like Anderson, Hemingway's influence on beginning writers was strong, but unlike Anderson's, it still endures, though it is not, I realize, anywhere near as strong as it once was.

What major author is influencing the work of beginning writers today, I wondered. This is a query one tosses to our critics. Can the middle-aged and older novelists of our day stand in comparison with the novelists of the recent past: Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Willa Cather, and Faulkner. All of these writers were alive and functioning full stride when I was in my twenties; and all of them are gone now. In my opinion the present crop of living "name" writers just does not belong in their league.

Recently I reread a section of an essay by Edmund Wilson published in his volume, *A Piece of My Mind.* It dealt in part with Wilson's weariness with much contemporary writing. He wrote: "I make no attempt to keep up with the younger American writers; and I only hope to have the time to get through some of the classics I have never read. Old fogeyism is comfortably closing in."

Although I admire Wilson immensely, his plaint is not mine. I still read the few worthwhile magazines I subscribe to, and I continue to read the opening pages of some of the novels highly touted by critics, hoping that sparks of originality and true talent will leap out from the print at me. The classics, I confess, do not interest me now; they belong to my past reading.

The arrival of the Twayne volume continued to revive old memories. Skimming through it I felt I was lucky to begin writing during the late twenties and thirties when there was a plethora of "little" magazines that young writers could send their stories to. Turning to the bibliography at the end of the Twayne volume, I found that my own first work appeared in magazines with such names as *Midland, Prairie Schooner, Left, Trend, Nativity, Parade, Old Line,* and *Pagany.* None of these magazines was a university quarterly, none was edited by professors or academics. Almost all were short-lived. Their editors were young and eager, burning to discover fresh talent, editing their magazines from their homes or rooming houses in various parts of the country. None of them was subsidized, none had grants. The best of these little magazines was perhaps *Pagany;* unlike the others, *Pagany* was a well-printed quarterly edited by a Bostonian, Richard Johns, who lived in a little apartment near Gramercy Square. Johns was the recipient of the then huge sum of fifteen-hundred dollars, given by his father, a Boston lawyer, to edit *Pagany.* It was the only little magazine that paid its contributors. Its fees ran, as I recall, to ten dollars for a short story, five dollars for a poem.

In 1969, the Beacon Press of Boston, to its credit, published *A Return to Pagany,* a thick volume containing the history of the magazine and reprints of the various contributions published in its pages during the period 1929–1932, which was its total run. When starting the magazine, Richard Johns had the valuable assistance of William Carlos Williams. I remember the sensation the first issue of *Pagany* caused among beginning writers; it printed work by Kenneth Rexroth, Witter Bynner, Louis Zukofsky, Harry Crosby, William Carlos Williams, Janet Lewis, Robert McAlmon, Gertrude Stein, Erskine Caldwell, Georges Hugnet, Yvor Winters, and others.

I made issue number 3 of *Pagany* with a short story for which I received a check for ten dollars. Soon, contributors to the magazine included Ezra Pound, Kenneth Burke, William March, Mina Loy, James T. Farrell, Josephine Herbst, John Herrmann, Paul Bowles, Harold Rosenberg, John Cheever, Jean Toomer, Conrad Aiken, Tess Slesinger, Horace Gregory, R. P. Blackmur, Charles Reznikoff, Katherine Anne Porter, Edward Dahlberg, Emanuel Carnevali, Lionel Abel, and many others. I was lucky enough to have stories published in six issues. All of us were pleased to receive the modest checks.

Many of the current literary quarterlies, printed on fine paper, arrive from the halls of academe. On the whole, in my opinion, their contents make for stuffy reading; they lack fire and originality. There are exceptions, of

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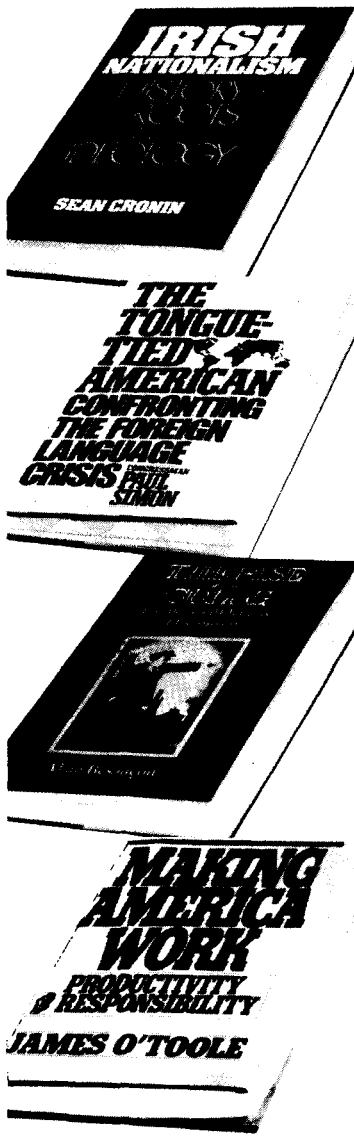

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course, but the era of the brave little magazines of my youth are, I'm afraid, now mere historical literary footnotes. Yet the initial efforts of many writers published in those almost forgotten publications still leap from their pages with surprising delight and, sometimes, power. Will a comparable era of literary excitement, akin to that during which those little magazines were published with such love and fierce idealism by their youthful editors, ever return? It is not likely. The cruel law of current economics forbids it; today's high printing costs alone are outrageously prohibitive for new publishing ventures of an amateur or experimental nature. No, the arrival of such magazines on the literary scene seems very dubious. But one can hope that if, indeed, two or three brave little magazines appear in the near future, they will not contain contributions influenced by the bloodless stories published by so many recognized writers today. The best fiction of the thirties, in the main, was inherently modest. During the Great Depression most writers lived close to the bone; it was not a time for fancy language. Sherwood Anderson, Hemingway, Willa Cather, and other prominent authors wrote simply and movingly, and for the most part, beginning writers fell under their influence.

Today, young unpublished writers are faced with a tragic situation unknown to beginners of the past: the dark shadow of economics. The high cost of merely existing exerts a forceful brake on their thoughts as they attempt to master their craft. The rent, the rent! The rent today even for a small, one-room apartment in a rundown neighborhood in New York or any large American city is frightfully high. If a young writer does not receive checks from home or lacks the income from an inheritance or some other source, the road to even a modest success is rocky and tortuous indeed.

I set the Twayne volume down and recalled the cheap rooms I had lived in on the lower west side of New York upon my arrival from Chicago. The weekly rent was rarely more than four dollars, and I ate adequately on a dollar a day in nearby cafeterias. After a few months, I was lucky enough to recognize two young artists from Chicago walking along Eighth Avenue. They told me they were tired of living in cramped rooms in rooming houses. Walking up the street in the cold wind, we decided to pool our dwindling funds. We found a large, unheated, six-room railroad apartment in the south Bronx, for twenty-four dollars a month, which broke down to eight dollars a man. We bought a second-hand pot-belly stove for three dollars and began cooking our own meals. We each had a bedroom and there was one room each for the two painters to work in. It turned out to be a good deal for me, because my apartment-mates worked all day painting walls in a Bronx hospital and attended art classes at the National Academy in the evening. I strode during the day through the barely furnished, silent rooms like a king. But after a few months, when their workdays were shortened because of a financial crisis at the hospital and the pair started painting or bringing playful hospital nurses to the flat, my solitary days of writing came to an end. We parted as friends.

After scouting Manhattan, I rented a three-room, cold-water flat near Union Square for twenty dollars a month. I settled in it, alone, for a wonderful period of work. I heated the place with the kitchen oven, went to the public bathhouse on Second Avenue every Friday, and cooked my own meals. Food was astonishingly cheap during the depression—a loaf of bread cost eight cents, A & P coffee was nineteen cents a pound, hamburger was fourteen cents, a can of sardines went for a dime. My total weekly living expenses ran around eight dollars, including rent.

Amusements were dirt cheap. On nearby Third Avenue a movie house charged ten cents for admission. And in the big vaudeville house on Fourteenth Street one could see, during special performances, Sophie Tucker and George Jessel for a twenty-five-cent admission ticket. Nearby, outdoor amusements were free and exciting; frequent left-wing rallies and demonstrations brought crowds of people and students to Union Square. Speakers shouted and exhorted, police patrolled on restless horses, and sometimes there was violence. Following the marches and demonstrations, there were often dances in nearby union halls, drawing students from Columbia and New York universities, and one met magnificent, liberated women during those evenings. I heard, of course, the usual Marxist "revolutionary" jargon spouted by the dancers, but I went for the excitement, not to be re-

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educated. It wasn't a bad time to be a struggling young writer.

Certainly, there were no courses in "creative writing" in those days. The colleges offered only the time-honored courses in expository writing and in literature. Today, courses in creative writing are beyond count. They are held not only in universities but in women's clubs, churches, nursing homes, and prisons. To older writers their popularity is puzzling. The word *creative* is now mouthed by everyone, especially by advertising agents, TV producers, apartment decorators, hairstylists, and designers of blue jeans. But college instructors in writing courses continue to maintain the prime stranglehold on that valued, diamond-studded word. Students are drawn to their classes like moths to the flame.

The frenzied hopes aroused by entering these classes are carefully nurtured by instructors who, assigning "projects," lecture with authority as they "evaluate" the handiwork of their pupils. True "insight" for skilled creative writing can be obtained, the instructors declare, after building upon the "learning process" a student acquires during a course. What is not mentioned is the fact that writing is a very lonely "learning process," to say the least. One becomes a writer in loneliness, at least in my experience, by studying the works of important writers. One reads their books at home or in the public libraries, sitting alone, studying their writing styles, beginning to absorb and learn something about the technique and craft of writing, of putting one's personal thoughts and ideas and dramatic situations down on paper.

If a young aspirant dreams of becoming a writer but hesitates because he or she lacks a college education, there is no reason for despair. Mark Twain, Hemingway, and Sherwood Anderson never enrolled in any college—and Faulkner was a student at the University of Mississippi for only a few weeks. Stephen Crane attended an upstate New York college briefly, then dropped out and rented a room on the Bowery where he wrote *Maggie*, a remarkable novel, when he was twenty-one. Living alone, he wrote his masterpiece, *The Red Badge of Courage*, when he was twenty-three. The above facts are not widely broadcast by certain academics pushing summer writing seminars in hundreds of mountain and seaside resorts. It is, in my opinion, highly doubtful that trying to become a writer while working in groups or in pleasant company will pay off. Writing remains a solitary business for the beginner as well as the veteran.

I look back on my youthful years with its painful period of rejected manuscripts followed by small fees paid for truly sweated-over work without an ounce of regret. I was fortunate, while young, to meet a great editor and teacher, Elliot Cohen, who edited the *Menorah Journal* and later founded *Commentary*. Around Elliot Cohen there emerged a group of young writers—among them were Lionel Trilling, Charles Reznikoff, Louis Berg, Tess Slesinger, Kenneth Fearing—who met at Cohen's office, or in his home, or at an Italian restaurant on West Twenty-third Street, whose multi-course meals at one dollar a throw were a bit high-priced for me. Conversations during these youthful meetings were not only about literature but also about politics. And of course we got into the habit of destroying the reputations of some of the famous writers of the day. It wasn't a bad way for fledgling writers to start their careers.

Later, still living in cold quarters and occasionally going hungry, I was lucky enough, owing to the sponsorship of Elliot Cohen, to be invited to spend an entire summer and part of the autumn at Yaddo, the artists' and writers' colony in Saratoga Springs, New York. There I met young writers and painters and composers as lonely and as hungry as I was—beginners who were published in small magazines or whose paintings had been shown in the lesser galleries of New York. During the day we locked ourselves in our private studios or rooms overlooking the lush hills of the Adirondacks, typing or painting until dinner time. The food was always good, and the evening meals, served in the dining room by uniformed maids, were magnificent and made us, for a while, forget our seamy rooms and studios back in New York. After dinner we sat in comfortable chairs around a big roaring fire in the huge living room and our nightly bull sessions began. Although we discussed writing and painting endlessly, none of us mentioned his own work; that topic might prove too dangerous. Among my fellow residents were Winthrop Sargeant, Gregorio Prestopino, Aaron Copland, Paul Bowles, Louis Lozowick, Irving Stone, Lola Ridge, Percy

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MacKaye, and Leonard Ehrlich. Yaddo still exists today, inviting writers, artists, and composers to its quiet quarters. Besides Yaddo, there is also the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. These creative temples are worth praying in, and there may be others.

There are also the generous Guggenheim Fellowships awarded yearly to worthy beginners as well as to established figures. When I received one in 1934, a Guggenheim Fellowship was worth two thousand dollars, in those days a sum sufficient to last a year if one was not wasteful. I lived in London a full year, like a young lord, on my two thousand dollars. Today a recipient of a Guggenheim receives, I am told, more than sixteen thousand dollars. There are no strings attached to Guggenheim Fellowships. One may travel abroad or stay at home. One may work his head off or just think and loaf. No one checks up on you. No one asks to see the work you have accomplished during your fellowship year.

Besides receiving a Guggenheim Fellowship, fate has rolled the dice favorably for me occasionally. My first novel, *Union Square*, was a Literary Guild selection, a best-seller that was translated into ten foreign languages—a success I never expected the book to receive. Another novel, *The Foundry*, was lavishly praised by Sinclair Lewis in an entire front-page review in the Sunday New York *Herald-Tribune* book section; it was also an unexpected best-seller. Then, on the ship bringing me back from England, I received a cryptic cable from my agent. "Do you know Dashiell Hammett?" When I arrived in New York my agent repeated the question. "Do you know Hammett?"

"No," I said.

"Well, all the motion-picture companies turned down *The Foundry* for filming, but Hammett forced MGM to buy it."

"You mean the novel is optioned?"

"No, they paid the full price for it. Hammett wants to work on the script. He's their big money-maker this year and they don't want to anger him."

It wasn't my fault Dashiell Hammett, whom I never met, failed to come up with a workable shooting script. Nathanael West, whom I knew slightly, also failed to come up with a good script for the novel. A few months later, in New York, I met Robert Morss Lovett, Edmund Wilson's friend and co-editor of the *New Republic* and, at the time, a professor of English at the University of Chicago. "I voted for you," he said pleasantly when we were introduced.

"What does that mean?" I inquired.

"I was on the Pulitzer Prize selection jury. I voted for *The Foundry* to win the Pulitzer Prize, but I was outvoted." I hadn't even known my novel had been nominated, having been in England at the time.

These have been among the fruits of a fairly successful writing career. The drafts of hemlock come later. As you grow older, you discover that writing styles and subjects change and the public's taste in novels changes, but you do not tend to change along with them. Why should you change? Your work is your deepest self; it is your private truth. If you have been an honest writer during your career it seems impossible for you to change as the years creep up on you. Did Hemingway, Faulkner, Sherwood Anderson, or Fitzgerald change their writing styles, their views on life? As they grow older, the quality of most good writers' work falls off. That is only natural. The greatest quarterbacks in football and the most famous pitchers in baseball lose their stuff in time. The tragedy is that few of these major writers or quarterbacks or pitchers will admit they are not as good as they used to be.

I begin to feel this natural fallout about myself—sometimes. I find I take longer to finish a new novel. I find I have to rewrite and restructure much of it. I find some of my new work turned down by editors and publishers before I do more rewriting on it.

Perhaps the trick is to write only one novel, a good one like *The Catcher in the Rye*, then stop publishing. That could well be the safest policy to follow—but who wants to lead a safe life? For most writers, writing becomes their only life; and it is a lonely, maybe even dangerous, but nonetheless wonderful life. All it calls for is honesty, hope, and stamina—that's all. As I type these words of wisdom, I hear the roars of young lions in the nearby woods. These noises are only a little frightening; they do not upset me. I have expected them. They are the sounds of serious young beginners emerging from the woods, eager to claim their own portions of the literary feast lying upon the sunny plain before them.

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'Tis Not an Easy Thing

THE LETTERS OF JOHN WILMOT, EARL OF ROCHESTER. *Edited and annotated with an introduction by Jeremy Treglown. University of Chicago Press. $26.*

Reviewed by JOHN P. SISK

Jeremy Treglown's edition of the letters of John Wilmot, earl of Rochester, poet-king of the "merry gang" that enlivened the court of Charles II, comes out as a surprisingly small book at a time when collected letters often run to several volumes. If it really were what its title suggests, it would be even smaller: of its 142 letters, only 101 are from Rochester, and many of these are very short. The others are letters written to him by such fellow rakehells as the duke of Buckingham, Lord Buckhurst, John Muddyman, and Henry Savile, or about him by his mother as he lay dying at age thirty-three, probably from the ravages of tertiary syphilis. It is this combination of letters from, to, and about Rochester that makes the book such a fascinating picture of individual and group dissipation in the Restoration.

Mr. Treglown, currently on the staff of the *Times Literary Supplement*, is an established scholar in Restoration poetry. His special contribution here is a brief biographical sketch and copious but never pedantically excessive notes (without which much of such gossipy material as these letters contain would be meaningless to anyone but a specialist in the period). As it is, the book will read almost like a novel if one brings to it little more than a gentleman's knowledge of England as it was rebounding from Cromwell in the 1660s and 1670s. Such a reader will nevertheless be wise to have at hand David M. Vieth's 1968 edition of the poems and either Vivian de Sola Pinto's biography *Enthusiast in Wit* or Graham Greene's excellently written and lavishly illustrated *Lord Rochester's Monkey*.

To those whose knowledge of Rochester is confined to the few lyrics and satires that appear in the standard anthologies, *The Letters* will imply a valuation of its subject as unexpected as the eighteen-page checklist of Rochester studies in Vieth's edition of the poems. Rochester himself might be surprised. On his deathbed he writes to the king's chaplain, Dr. Thomas Pierce, about his unalterable resolve "to become a new man" if God will spare him a little longer so "that the world may see how I loathe sin and abhor the very remembrance of those tainted and unclean ways I once delighted in." This would seem to imply his own conviction that as a writer his name was not only writ in water but deserved to be. No doubt by then he had forgotten what Dryden, to whom for a while he was a patron, had once written to him: "You can write better on the meanest subject than I can on the best."

Nevertheless, Rochester's reputation as poet and rakehell wit has lived on vigorously. No sooner was he dead than a collection of his "profane and lewd writings" was published, as Anthony à Wood notes, "merely for lucre sake." Marvell thought he was "the best English satyrist." Aphra Behn said of him: "He was but lent this duller World but t'improve In all the charms of Poetry and Love." Pope owned and apparently benefited from a late seventeenth-century edition of the poems. Voltaire thought him a man of genius. A hundred years after Rochester's death Johnson recognized that his "blaze of reputation is not yet quite extinguished" and included him in *Lives of the Poets* while omitting Herrick and Marvell. Hazlitt thought Rochester's "contempt for everything that others respect, almost amounts to sublimity." Tennyson greatly admired "A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind." Edmund Gosse thought him "the finest lyrical poet of the Restoration."

Before the century was out even the Rochester letters were famous—those, that is, that were made public—and much admired as models in the two editions of *Familiar Letters* (1697, 1699). The latter of these is the printed source here for much of the Rochester-Savile correspondence and for all letters from Rochester to his actress-mistress Elizabeth Barry (none of her letters to him survive). These letters have been tidied up by the printer and give some support to Pinto's contention that Rochester at his best anticipates Swift at his best. The prose of the holograph letters, on the other hand, is reproduced faithfully with all its idiosyncrasies of spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure, and thereby gives, as

JOHN P. SISK, professor of English at Gonzaga University, is the author of *Person and Institution*. His essays and reviews have appeared in *Harper's*, the *Atlantic*, and other journals.

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Treglown says, "a feeling of [its] author's individuality." I suspect, however, that most readers will find in the holographic Rochester, for all his restless and audacious wit, intimations less of Swift than of the spontaneous prose of Jack Kerouac.

The different editions have an interesting effect on the images of Rochester as husband and lover. There are thirty-eight letters to his wife in this collection, most of them reproduced from holograph copies, while the thirty-five letters to Elizabeth Barry have been tidied up for the *Familiar Letters*. Here Treglown's collection serves to make an important point about the difference between married and unmarried love. Rochester sounds much more individual and spontaneous writing to his wife than to his mistress. An eighteenth-century editor warns his readers not to expect from letters to the wife ("to whom if not ever constant, he was always civil") "anything of that Flame and Passion" they are expected to find in the letters to Elizabeth Barry. But Rochester, for all his flame and passion, is less interesting and more predictable as a lover (at least until the affair goes sour, as it inevitably does) than he is as an all too often absent husband caught up in a complex domestic relationship. Nothing he wrote to Elizabeth Barry measures up to a wonderful letter to his wife (probably written not long before his death) that begins: " 'Tis not an easy thing to bee intirely happy. . . ."

Indeed, the reader of these letters may believe that Rochester set out to prove how hard it is to be entirely happy. Perhaps like Stendhal he had too much quicksilver in his veins; perhaps, like all the rakehells of history, he was done in by his conviction that the conscious pursuit of happiness is a proper life program. In the above-quoted letter to his wife he writes: "I must not be too wise about my owne follyes, or els this letter had been a booke dedicated to you & publish'd to the world." He was more often disgusted or cynical than wise about his follies, and his growing awareness of them made him increasingly unhappy. In a letter to Savile that begins, appropriately enough, with a reference to Falstaff, he thinks it "a fault to laugh at the monkey we have been when I compare his condition with mankind." A little later, again to Savile, he is tormented with "spleenetick vapours" so that "from the rising of the Sun to the setting thereof, I see noething that pleases my eyes, nor heare noething but what grates my eares."

Rochester had, in fact, that combination of advantages—good looks, passionate wit, aristocratic birth—that was most likely to make him unhappy in the Restoration world. As he recognized toward the end of his short life (the letters to Savile are full of the perception), for him, at least, it was a bad time to be alive. Even his best satires are indulgences in disgust, confessions more of his complicity in evil than excoriations of the evil world, so that he anticipates the self-disgust of those later aristocrats manqué, the modernists. "All philosophy excepting scepticism is little more than dotage," Charles Blount, an admirer of Hobbes, writes to Rochester at a time when he is beginning to doubt it, but he had believed it too long for his own good as a satirist. Thus "The Imperfect Enjoyment," which Treglown thinks "the best poem ever written about premature ejaculation," is more successful in its fantastic confinement to his own experience than is the much admired "A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind" in its ambitious satiric reach.

"You have the strongest security our frail and daily changing frame can give," Rochester writes to Elizabeth Barry, thereby betraying, Treglown points out, his attachment to Montaigne's theme of inconstancy. Montaigne and Hobbes reinforced the quicksilver qualities of his personality. Like Zimri (Buckingham) in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, he "was everything by starts, and nothing long." His "pieces are commonly short, such as one fit of resolution would produce," wrote Dr. Johnson, who also wondered, "What more can be expected from a life spent in ostentatious contempt of regularity. . . ?"

If Rochester had not been cursed with noble birth, if like Dryden he had been forced to make his living as a writer, there might have been more regularity in his life. Pinto believes that such a life would have involved a compromise with the Philistines, forgetting the extent to which Rochester's Hobbesian philosophy could be used to undercut any inclination to take an uncompromising stand on principle. Nevertheless, unlike Byron, whom he resembles in so many ways, such a livelihood was denied Rochester, and one consequence was that he was forever short of

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money, even though his wife had an income of £2000 a year. He confesses to his mother that one of his chief motives for taking part in the disastrous English expedition against the Dutch fleet at Bergen was to acquire "shirts and gould which I had most neede of." He writes to his wife, from whose regularizing domesticity at his estate in Oxfordshire he is so often separated, "I have a poor living to get that I may be less Burdensome to your Ladyship," and later, remarking on an all too common condition, "ready Cash I have but little." But to get money he had to be at court, and there the merry gang (one of the merriest of which was the king) only aggravated his irregularities.

Perhaps the most regular thing in his life was the heroic couplet, that model of controlled energy which, when he was at his best with it (as he often was), rebuked the irregularity of his life. The couplet had a firmly disciplined character if any measure ever had, and may have been the perfect verse form for his violent and self-destructive personality. And here, for all that he was born in a bad time, Rochester was lucky: he could be one of the shapers of the couplet. Had he lived more temperately, he might have been around to see himself imitated as Pope began his career. Beginning a letter to his wife the year of his death, he writes of the "disproportion t'wixt our desires & what it has ordained to content them." More than anything else it may have been the couplet that made it possible to salvage something from this disproportion.

Until, that is, he was regularized by his conversion, a salvage to which he was helped by Gilbert Burnet and Robert Parsons. Perhaps, as Treglown suggests, the death was the occasion for some stage management—this was, indeed, the coming home of no ordinary prodigal. But about the sincerity of Rochester's conversion there seems to be no question. Pinto only regrets the dowager mother's burning—on Rochester's alleged orders—of his "profane and lewd writings" and "obscene and filthy pictures, which were so notoriously scandalous," as Parsons puts it in his funeral sermon.

The sermon itself may be, as Pinto believes, only "a passable piece of seventeenth-century oratory," but it might very well have been included as the final document in this book. It is, after all, the context for Rochester's last letter, addressed to "all those whom I may have drawn into sin by my example and encouragement." One of those sinners was his fellow rakehell, William Fanshaw, who, "lame and lean, with mouth awry from the pox," Graham Greene writes, visited the dying man. As his mother reports to her sister-in-law, Rochester advises his "great friend" to "repent you of your former life, and amend your ways." But Fanshaw—who had once shared a sweating house in Leather Lane with Savile and the pox-wracked Jane Roberts, mistress to both Rochester and the king—"stood and said never a word to him but stole away out of the room." Later, says Greene, he was one of those at court who laughed away the repentence. To the merry gang it could only have seemed highly irregular.

A Rutgers Fitzgerald

THE LIFE OF JOHN O'HARA. *By Frank MacShane. Dutton. $15.95.*

Reviewed by BRADLEY MILLER

> Children pick up words as pigeons peas
> And utter them again as God shall please.
> —John Ray, *English Proverbs*

To Scott Fitzgerald, John O'Hara seemed "in a perpetual state of having discovered it's a lousy world." Until his final days in 1970 at the age of sixty-five, O'Hara illustrated his discovery: in fourteen novels (one of 897 pages), several plays and novellas, hundreds of short stories, and a wide range of journalism. Frank MacShane, in his persuasive peroration, says that "thirty or forty short stories" and the novels *Appointment in Samarra* (1934), *From the Terrace* (1958), and *The Lockwood Concern* (1965) "make O'Hara one of the half-dozen most important writers of his time." Whether or not one agrees with Mr. MacShane, and whether or not he has accomplished his purpose of renewing "an interest in O'Hara's work through a look at his life," he has done himself proud with this biography. Nothing important is scamped, and seldom are minutiae piled on indiscriminately. This

BRADLEY MILLER's essays and reviews have appeared in various newspapers and journals.

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is a full and engaging portrait of a man so insufferably pompous and boorish that, in comparison, Papa Hemingway almost seems a paragon of finishing-school deference.

O'Hara used many of the impressionistic techniques now associated with new journalism, along with a few associated with your basic old journalism. His best short stories cut to the quick, with taut renderings of atmosphere and tension. He made famous "*The New Yorker* short story," with its largely plotless suggestion of character through dialogue and details of setting. Had it been O'Hara instead of Tom Wolfe at Leonard Bernstein's party for the Black Panthers, he too would have noticed everything, but he would likely have used the material for a novel or short story in which, say, Lenny's wife loses her heart to a Panther, and Lenny either kills himself or stumbles on dazed and dispirited but not quite destroyed—all rendered without ridicule or sentimentality.

Carried through the length of a novel, the fact-heavy style can be punishing. "We are deluged, suffocated, drowned in facts, facts, facts," moaned Alfred Kazin after wrestling with the elephantine *From the Terrace*, which O'Hara considered his best novel. O'Hara was hell-bent, as he put it, "to get it all down on paper while I can"—even if his readers went down in the bargain. Why? Here might be a clue: "Forty years ago this month," O'Hara wrote in 1965, "I entered the newspaper business, and I have been in and out of it but never far away from it ever since." In 1949 he said that "the newspaper influence is a good one for the writer. . . . When you're on rewrite as I was, you can't fool around at half-past nine trying to write beautiful lacy prose." None of that beautiful lacy stuff for O'Hara, who knew his Hemingway. He prided himself on how fast he could write and, admirably, wanted to get it all down before the last deadline of them all.

The newspaper influence has always been heavy in American literature and can indeed be a good antidote to vagueness and diarrhea of the typewriter. But if we are to maintain any useful distinction between literature and reporting, it seems fair to stress that literature of the first rank must be more than representation; that even the best eyes and ears—and O'Hara's were the best—cannot compensate for the lack of powerfully conceived characters who, whatever their morals and values, transcend the quotidian by the force and color of their individuality. With rare exceptions—George Lockwood of *The Lockwood Concern* being perhaps the finest—O'Hara's characters are nobodies, too drab for mockery and almost for sympathy. They seem less like victims of a mean and empty world than tedious reflections of it. One may forget his adventures but remember Tom Jones; a Pal Joey, to take O'Hara's rogue as a not-quite-forgotten example, cannot fire our imaginations or inspire any great tidal uprush of empathy.

MacShane hails O'Hara's ear for dialogue as "an astonishing gift, the most important he had as a writer." It was a good ear all right, but the gift is not uncommon among the hacks of Broadway, Hollywood, and the newspapers. Nor is it uncommon for the reproduction of speech to become a lazy escape from distilling the gist of something and shutting up. Logically extended, this will lead us to the apotheosis, not of literature, but of tape recording, if we are not there now.

Nor is MacShane quite convincing in saying that O'Hara evolved some sort of "vision." O'Hara used surfaces, MacShane says, to reveal "inner disquiet," "the human condition," et cetera. As have all writers, surely—otherwise what would be the point of writing at all? Sophomores drunk on Camus have about the same "vision" as O'Hara. As MacShane himself notes elsewhere, O'Hara preferred the stage box to the ivory tower, and facts about men to abstractions about Man.

What O'Hara did best was portray what Edmund Wilson called "the cruel side of snobbery." He was obsessed with social class. He wrote about almost all sides of American life but was in his real element with the pre–World War II world of snobbery and Babbittry of "Gibbsville," the fictional name for Pottsville, the Pennsylvania coal-mining town of twenty-five thousand where he was born and raised. The sorry states of characters and their environment unfold through dialogue and status symbols—this or that kind of school, clothes, address, food, liquor, resort, club, et cetera. Only sex offers release from the status panic—usually into anarchy and tragedy.

O'Hara's own experiences growing up in Pottsville permanently overheated his status consciousness. He was the oldest of eight children of a middle-class Irish-Catholic fam-

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ily. His father, a respected surgeon, was a remote and sometimes cruel man who never forgave John for not following his footsteps into medical school. Nor was his father amused when John got booted out of two boarding schools and failed to graduate from a third because he skipped the graduation ceremonies to get drunk. This also killed his chances of getting into Yale and caused him to spend his life musing how sweet Skull and Bones might have been. What galled O'Hara most of all was the scorn of the upper-class parents of his local heartthrob. Left behind in Pottsville when his friends departed for Ivy League campuses, he got drunk a lot, debauched mill girls, and drudged away at dull jobs. Two newspapers, the *Pottsville Journal* and the *Evening Courier* in nearby Tamaqua, fired him for his undependability. He explained later that he "always seemed to be in the corner saloon when the story broke." His father died when John was nineteen, leaving his family financially strained, which further intensified John's hypersensitivity before the Protestant nobs. The pattern was set and would never vary: he would shamelessly court the nobs but never fully win acceptance, and would fuel his fiction from his resentment.

At twenty-three he came to New York and spent the next five years rambling drunkenly and obnoxiously through the speakeasies—MacShane captures the moods and flavors of this era superbly—too drunkenly, in fact, to hold any of his various journeyman jobs in journalism. But he broke through at *The New Yorker,* first with sketches of local personalities, then with the short stories. He married at twenty-six and divorced at twenty-eight after his mother-in-law repeatedly objected to his instability as a provider. She had always thought that her daughter had married beneath herself. O'Hara was drunk and depressed most of the time and seemingly beyond the point of no return. Yet he still mustered a saving remnant of discipline for his writing, and in 1934, at twenty-nine, published his first novel, *Appointment in Samarra,* which put him on the map for good.

Being on the literary map, though, was never enough. His life was a long and unseemly push for social status (including a downright fetish for joining clubs). His last seventeen years were spent on the wagon, which did succeed in turning him from a boor into something closer to a bore, but the snobbishness stuck to the end. MacShane offers many colorful illustrations of O'Hara's overpowering lack of charm. Some examples: The time when, upon being introduced to a woman friend of a friend, he suggested that she go ——— herself. The time he decked a Hollywood woman he had long harassed for rebuffing his physical advances (he believed in getting violent with women only when angry). The time he urinated on the rest-room floor of a restaurant. The time when, at the peak of his wealth, having earned more than a million dollars from his writing, he gave his nineteen nieces and nephews $1,000 each for their education and, as part of the grand gesture, included a letter he had his sister draft that spelled out the terms of the gift and stressed that his tax situation meant it was actually costing him $80,000. My own favorite is this one: "Once at a dinner party he was seated opposite a bore he didn't like. He just sat there shaking his head snorting like a horse."

By 1962 he was openly aching for the Nobel Prize, not only for its own sake, but to use the prize money to buy a Rolls Royce. When John Steinbeck beat him out, he decided to get a Rolls anyway,

> and when, within the year, his friend Richard Hughes, governor of New Jersey, arranged to provide him with the state license plate of "JOH-1" he was as pleased as a little boy. Not long afterwards, the Hugheses and the O'Haras were invited for dinner by Bennett Cerf in New York, and the governor offered to have a state trooper drive them into town together in the governor's car. But O'Hara persuaded him to have the trooper drive the Rolls instead. O'Hara was like a latter-day robber baron showing off what his money could buy. He also had a gold cigarette case on which the seals of his various clubs were embossed. He would leave it casually on the coffee table, always happy to explain what they signified. He knew his display was vulgar, but he was honest enough to reveal his feelings.

"He sometimes seemed to enjoy being thought of as a roughneck and played the role of the American original," MacShane says. "Yet he would as quickly turn the other way and play the gentleman, eager to demonstrate through externals that he was one. What is endearing is that he was so transparent in revealing his feelings." MacShane also re-

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veals, though, that there were plenty who described him with harsher adjectives than "endearing."

O'Hara must have been comforted by James Thurber's words: "If he sometimes seems to exhibit the stormy emotions of a little boy, so do all great artists, for unless they can remember what it is to be a little boy, they are only half complete as artist and as man." This strikes me as mostly rubbish, but of course it is a widely accepted and charmingly romantic view. It is hardly surprising to learn that O'Hara "was fond of quoting Joseph Conrad's remark from the foreword to *Victory* that 'thinking is the greatest enemy to perfection.' " Action is all, and the more mindless the action the greater the evidence of artistic sensibility. Impulses from vernal minds, apparently, are the stuff of art. One can only wonder, then, what is delaying our Renaissance.

Here is a case of unconscious irony hard to top: In a letter written in 1960, O'Hara lashed out at Hemingway's "boy-did-we-raise-hell" bluster. Hemingway, God knows, could be an ass, but he had a maddening knack for the knockout retort. When he suggested, years earlier, that a fund be started to send O'Hara to Yale, O'Hara never quite lived it down. Had Papa got wind of this letter he might have been moved to commend to O'Hara the heuristic exercise of standing before a mirror and reciting the last stanza of Robert Burns's "To a Louse."

In his heyday O'Hara boozed and blustered with the worst of them, and came armed, as S. J. Perelman put it in his parody, with a "Koranic" knowledge of the *Social Register*. But over time the pretentious way he tried to live became so gagging that it turned his show to farce, something William Faulkner sensed when he dubbed him "a Rutgers Fitzgerald." Arguably a better writer than either Hemingway or Fitzgerald, and attracted to both personalities, O'Hara's own personality fell somewhere between the one's urbane flash and the other's gruff macho, and fell flat.

Only flat? No. MacShane, as befits a solid biographer, brims with well-elaborated *yets* and *buts*. With good friends O'Hara could be generous and charming. He was a decent father to his daughter. None of his three wives, as far as I have been able to find out, had to be held at gunpoint to marry him, and the last two stood by him devotedly. His last wife had the easiest go, because he had gone on the wagon by the time they married. But his second wife, Belle, who died from heart disease in 1953, was often called Saint Belle for all she endured. Knowing for whom Belle toiled, one asks why.

Under Siege

THE FORTIFICATIONS AND DEFENSE OF CONSTANTINOPLE. *By Byron C. P. Tsangadas. East European Monographs, no. 72. Distributed by Columbia University Press. $20.*

Reviewed by STEVEN RUNCIMAN

There was a time when the historian ranked high among men of letters. Men such as Gibbon or Macaulay, Motley or Prescott were among the literary giants of their age; and every practitioner of the discipline saw to it that even his essays and reviews were written with a due regard to style. Then there came the German school with its insistence on accurate and well-referenced detail, excellent academically but too often used as an excuse to neglect the art of historiography. However, the great German masters, such as Ranke and Mommsen, wrote with as much precision and elegance as the German language permits. The final ruin of historical writing came with the doctoral thesis, in which the candidate too often was required to cram into his text as many facts as possible, with little regard to the language in which they were expressed or even to their relative importance. Many Ph.D.'s have continued to write in this way in their later works. Nowadays, academic historians tend to regard a good literary style as pointless or even meretricious; and "fine writing" is a term of abuse.

There was a time, too, when academic publishers took pride in their publications, seeing to it that they were attractively produced and making sure that such aids as plates, maps, and indexes were properly prepared. Nowadays their standards are lower. A university press is required to make money for some

STEVEN RUNCIMAN's many works on Byzantine subjects include a three-volume *History of the Crusades*.

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overtaxed institution and usually sets about it in a sadly amateurish manner. The result is very unfair to the author and irritating to the intended reader.

These melancholy reflections are inspired by Mr. Tsangadas's work about the walls of Constantinople. Here is a scholar who really knows his subject and has important comments to make on it, but whose book, *The Fortifications and Defense of Constantinople,* is rendered almost valueless by its appalling presentation. The book is rather faintly printed on unattractive paper. We all sadly know that misprints are inevitable nowadays. Even after scrupulous proofreading some still manage to creep in, but there are so many here that one wonders if anyone attempted to proofread the book at all. Even the author's first name is misspelled on the title page. The index is perfunctory and inadequate, and the most deplorable feature is the quality of the maps. A book on the walls of Constantinople which deals with the identification of gates and towers ought to have a really good map of the city. Here we are provided with a map that has been taken from Pere Janin's *Géographie Ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantin.* It is an excellent map if reproduced on the scale of the original and if the reader does not mind that names are given in the French form. But it has been reduced to such small dimensions that even with the aid of a magnifying glass most names are completely illegible. There is a sketch of an approximate section and restoration of the walls of Theodosius II, which is copied from Van Millingen's *Byzantine Constantinople: The Walls of the City* and is almost equally illegibly reproduced. There are two plans of sections of the land walls and a rough sketch plan of the Bosporus-Propontis area. The author in his notes refers at times to maps in other works, notably Schneider's, but they are of little use to the reader who does not have the books at hand.

The author does not help his cause by his writing. His grammar is shaky, and there are some sentences that even lack a verb. It is sometimes impossible to extract any definite meaning from his text. I suppose that it is pedantic to dislike split infinitives, but solecisms such as "neither" followed by "or" recur. There are also frequent repetitions in the text. The author seems to hold with Lewis Carroll's dictum: "What I tell you three times is true." The book appears to have been written in sections, but though Mr. Tsangadas tells us that his research was completed in 1964, he seems never to have taken the time to correlate the various chapters. Had he done so with a critical eye the book would have been much shorter and much more effective. Also, he could then have checked that his use of place-names was consistent. The Blachernae quarter often appears in the text as "Blacherna" and even twice as "Blanchernae."

The miserable presentation of the book and the style of the writing would be less irritating if the scholarly content were equally bad. But Mr. Tsangadas is a scholar who has made a serious and thorough study of his subject. He clearly is well acquainted with every inch of the walls of Constantinople. He has examined the material and methods used in their construction and has noted all the surviving inscriptions. He identifies the gates and towers along the walls as satisfactorily as is possible, though perhaps he should have given more attention than he does to the undoubted fact that names have changed or have been transferred from one place to another. His work does not supersede Van Millingen's great book on the walls, to which he pays a warm and grateful tribute, but it helps to bring Van Millingen up to date.

Mr. Tsangadas's scope is wider than Van Millingen's because he tries to bring the fortifications into a general consideration of the defense of the city. He takes an interest in the Byzantine navy and in the part played by sea currents and prevailing winds. He illustrates Constantinople's strategy of defense by describing in some detail the sieges of the city by the Persians and Avars in 626 and by the Arabs in 674–78 and 717–18, with shorter accounts of the sieges by Krum of Bulgaria and the rebel Thomas. Here he shows a good understanding of the military and naval problems of both besiegers and besieged, though his story of the Arab sieges—for which the sources, both Greek and Arabic, are rather scanty—contains a large amount of repetitious conjecture. He also seems inclined to believe the legends invented by the Arabic chroniclers to explain the Arab failure. But he does include a valuable discussion on Greek fire, in which his conclusions—as far as his turgid style permits one to interpret them—seem well founded and judicious. It is a pity that he

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has not been able to include studies of the later sieges of the city (especially the final siege of 1453), which are better documented and provide far more helpful information about the great walls.

Mr. Tsangadas laments, with good reason, that he has not been allowed to do any archaeological work on the walls themselves. Their condition is rapidly deteriorating, and soon much important evidence will be lost. Though there is little that he can do about that, it is to be hoped that he will continue his research and extend it to cover the later Byzantine period. Then, if he can learn to arrange his material more significantly and effectively and express his findings with greater clarity and concision, and if he can find a publisher who will present the work as it deserves to be presented, he could produce a volume for which students of both Byzantium and the art of war would be grateful. But this book serves only to show once more that, while nowadays the study of history is still flourishing, the writing of history has sunk into neglect.

Plausibly Marvelous

REACHES OF HEAVEN: A STORY OF THE LIFE OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV. *By Isaac Bashevis Singer. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $15.*

Reviewed by JUDAH GOLDIN

Since the late fifteenth century—perhaps earlier, perhaps a bit later—whenever Jews react with both awe and love toward some of their great teachers, they like to refer to them not by their names (or sometimes by the titles of their chefs d'oeuvre) but by acronyms, adopted at first most likely as scribal economy. For example, the preeminent Bible and Talmud commentator, *R*abbi *SH*lomo *I*tzhaki (1040–1105) became known as RaSHI; the outstanding commentator, codifier, and philosopher *R*abbi *M*oshe *b*en *M*aimon (1135–1204) as RaMBaM; and many more. Even in modern times there were RaNaK (*R*abbi *N*achman *K*rochmal, 1785–1840), SHIR (*SH*lomo *I*ehudah *R*apoport, 1790–1867), and SHaDal (*SH*muel *D*avid *L*uzzatto, 1800–1865). Two leading personalities of the eighteenth century were Ha-GRA (*Ha*-Gaon, the genius, *R*abbi *A[E]*liyahu of Vilna, 1720–1797—*ha* is the Hebrew prefix for the definite article) and the BESHT (Israel ben Eliezer-*Baa[e]*l *SHem Tov*, ca. 1700–1760). The last named was not an eminent scholar, but the founder of Hasidism, the revivalist movement made popular in the West especially by the writings of the late Martin Buber and in our own times by books of photographs.

As is the case with many founders of religious movements, little reliable history is preserved of the Besht, and even that little is saturated by legend. The earliest literary source containing tales about him and his followers is from 1814 (*Shivhei ha-Besht;* there is an English translation by D. Ben-Amos and J. R. Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*). It is reported that the Besht was orphaned at an early age; that as a boy he frequently disappeared from school because he preferred to meditate in the nearby forest; that he was a cheerful *paidagogos* leading children to and from school; that he was drawn to mystical studies (rather than the traditional talmudic ones), which he carried on secretly lest anyone suspect him of intellectual attainments; that gradually he came to feel and to perceive that one carries out God's will by means of prayer and rejoicing, not through asceticism or melancholy disposition or talmudical expertise. He believed that proper prayer consisted of focused attention to the very particles of the prayer words and alphabet. It was to be a fervent cleaving to God and what may be called a flaming enthusiasm in worship. He came to appreciate the indispensability of saintly intermediacy—the role of the tzaddik—in the elevation of human beings from the captivity of the spiritual-sparks-in-impurity to the level of pure and holy thought and action. He left nothing in writing, but attracted followers and disciples by his moralizing anecdotes, brief homilies, and epigrammatic sayings. He acted like a typical itinerant Baal Shem (expert in manipulation of the divine Name) with his amulets, exorcisms, successful healings (of the blind, the paralyzed—he also predicted life and death), and his apparent psychological astuteness. Above all, he was known for his warm

JUDAH GOLDIN is professor of oriental studies at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of *Living Talmud* and *The Song at the Sea.*

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and devout personal conduct. There is, of course, more that can be added, but this should be sufficient for an outline of his personality in a short review.

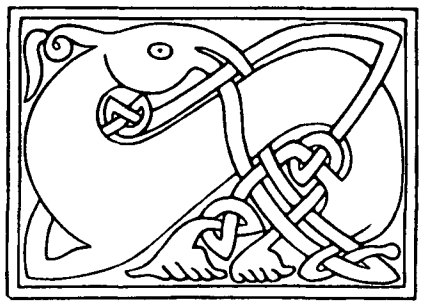
As is to be expected, books have been written on the Besht as well as articles in encyclopedias and histories of the Jews and histories and descriptions of Hasidism; comparisons have been drawn between the Besht and other holy men, even those of antiquity; and no serious student has failed to underscore the pervasiveness of legend in the modest amount of facts. But in his prefatory statement, I. B. Singer has made his own approach particularly explicit, and this is an important advance over the usual accounts. Art succeeds where scholarship is still trying.

> This short book does not pretend to be a biography of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov by any means. So little is known about his life that no life story is possible. This work is nothing more than the writer's impressions or fantasies of Rabbi Israel's way of thinking, his emotions, his spiritual achievements and disappointments. The few "miracles" told here are all ambiguous and could easily be explained in a psychological way.

In short, we are dealing with Singer's version of the Besht.

The result? By drawing on his own fantasies, I. B. Singer has paradoxically made the story of the life of the Besht plausible and the historicity of various details in the tales about the Besht easier to accept. How Singer does this we will look at briefly; but that he strives to do it, and succeeds, is significant even beyond this little book—for Hasidism, from the start, has sought to express its teachings by means of tales and anecdotes about its leaders from every generation, rather than by discussion of abstract doctrine or rules of conduct. (Rabbi Shneour Zalman of Liadi, 1745–1813, who did engage in abstract speculation, does not deny the value of stories about the tzaddikim, the different heads and successors of the Hasidic dynasties.) Singer therefore is on the main line. The plausibility of the marvelous is not necessary for faith, but it is mighty useful as a defense against skepticism.

How does Singer encourage credibility? By winning our confidence, which he sets out to do even before his prefatory statement, on the very title page where the subtitle announces: "A Story of the Life of the Baal Shem Tov"—



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not "the story," not "a history," much less "the history." No quarrel is now likely, for "a story" does not exclude the possibility of other stories, and "story" is granted more freedom than "history." Add to his forthrightness his disciplined imaginativeness: according to legend, the Besht was something of a holy dropout as a boy and often ran away from school to meditate in the woods. Mr. Singer prefers him otherwise: "Young Israel was sent to a cheder, where he learned to read Hebrew, studied the Pentateuch with Rashi commentary and soon began to study the Gemara. It was quickly realized that he had a mind well suited to scholarly pursuits." Spontaneity is here reinforced by the standard curriculum of studies. The boy retreats to the forest for meditation, but not as a truant. The older he grows and the more he ponders, the more obvious it becomes to the Besht that neither the Bible nor the Talmud nor the works of philosophers—*The Guide of the Perplexed*, *The Khuzari*, *Faith and Opinions*—can provide an answer to profound questions about the nature of God, the trials of the Jews, and the tolerance of evil and suffering in the world by a merciful God. "Only the cabbala devoted itself to the secrets of heaven and earth"—specifically *The Book of Creation*, *The Orchard of Pomegranates*, *The Tree of Life*—"as well as cabbala manuscripts" still unpublished; and if he was at first too young to understand all of it, at least "he gathered its essence." Later he even hears of Spinoza's teachings. The Besht has been transformed into an almost model serious student, perhaps even something of a scholar with the good taste not to show off his learning.

And because he is human, though remarkable, he is subject or sensitive to the same temptations of the flesh that you and I and I. B. Singer himself (in many of his stories) can't escape entirely, even as he regrets that there are Ten Commandments rather than nine. In one form or another, licit and illicit sexual wishes are referred to at least ten times in a text of forty-seven pages (the other forty-six pages are devoted to twenty-three illustrations by Ira Moskowitz). All the goodness of the Besht and the deep love he feels for Israel are, in other words, not signs of a naïf, but a combination of natural impulse and reflection, which grows (often) out of the ecstasy of even statutory prayer, when the familiar words are responded to as though seen for the first time: "He went out into the field to pray. Never before had the words of the prayers possessed such poignancy as today. Whoever is privileged to enjoy greatness of thought knows the gratification of praising the Almighty, of being united with Him. Everything comes from him—all beauty, all bliss." Since this may still be somewhat abstract, Singer continues wisely (cleverly adapting at the same time part of a midrash on Abraham and Sarah): "Even a worm in the ground enjoys His favors. Is it known, then, what a worm is? All the sages in the world could get together, and still they couldn't create a worm, a fly, a mite."

Even a recluse can enjoy such experience, but although the Besht, too, indulges in periodic withdrawals, he is anything but a recluse. The weight of the world is on him. "From the countless requests for advice the Baal Shem received, he learned a lot not only about worldly affairs, but about Jewishness as well. The truth is that there is no difference between the two." We are listening, of course, to Singer, but what he says has the right pitch. "Since everything comes from God and is a part of Him, how can one thing be called secular and another religious? Even a sin can't be completely severed from its divine source." This may serve as commentary on *In Praise of (Shivhei ha-Besht)* #44, on the Besht's grief at the news of the conversion of the Frankists. What is more, because he is genuinely foresighted, the Besht can suspect or detect what is beginning to happen as a consequence of his popularity, and has forebodings of what the future will do to the Hasidim. This is not prophecy but intelligence, wisdom. Singer knows what is going on.

By making the Besht plausible, Singer has presented him as a holy man, a Jewish holy man, who exemplifies what the Jewish tradition has always intended by "relation-of-man-to-God and of-man-to-fellow-man," by rejoicing with trembling (Ps. 2:11), by "What one nation in the earth is like Thy people Israel" (II Sam. 7:23, I Chron. 17:21). For that one does not require legends, though legends are likely to gravitate toward those who do exemplify that tradition, even when enthusiasm is not emphasized as it is in Hasidism. (It may be significant that not once does Singer use

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the word *charismatic,* although the word would not be out of place in his story—perhaps because he doesn't want this word of sociologists to interfere with the natural grace of the Besht.)

But I can't help wondering whether a plausible Besht—that is, a personality from whom legend has been stripped away—can be the *founder* of a religious movement. It is surely probable that saintliness is not enough. It can be granted readily that behind the legends about the Besht is a historical core, and Singer has demonstrated at least one way to tell such a story. However, what gave Hasidism its momentum was more than the man and his virtues. It involved the kind of teacher about whom legends could be created: a man cleaving to the traditional and knowing that even more (not necessarily of the same) was called for, apparently unafraid of ridicule, uninhibited by current propriety, conscious of the limits of the intellect, and undismayed by the risks in deviations.

When a man is drowning in a river, and splashes about trying to pull himself out of the waters that are overwhelming him, those who see him will certainly not make fun of his splashing. So, when a man makes all kinds of gestures as he prays, there is no reason to make fun of him, for he is saving himself from the raging waters—those husks and barbarous thoughts—that come upon him to distract him from his prayer.

The legends, therefore, are not an artificial supplement. They were probably essential in a period when the Jewish spirit was depleted as a result of the devastating culmination of the Sabbatian messianic frenzy and heresy and the even more catastrophic Frankist one, as well as the Chmielnicki massacres. The Besht was not entirely unaware of these; it is even possible that he innocently studied some Sabbatian compositions and unwittingly was influenced by them. No miracle was necessary to stir up his emotions and thinking and actions. But it was a miracle of sorts that he could affect so many so soon—and against formidable opposition by the rabbinical and communal establishments—first in the little towns of Eastern Europe and subsequently in large regions as well, and it was to this latter

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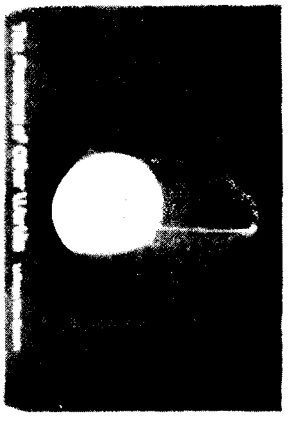

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miracle that the legends made their necessary contribution.

The legends are indispensable, therefore, if we are to understand Hasidism as well as the man who came to be known as the Besht. Perhaps without the Besht there might or again might not have been Hasidism, but it is not unfair to suggest that without Hasidism there would have been not the Besht but simply an Israel ben Eliezer.

Closing cavils: On page 4 correct the typo "Elisha son of Abihu" to be "Elisha son of Abuyah." On page 90 when speaking of a talmudic sage, read "Amora" rather than "Amorite." In the illustration facing that page, instead of "Yizkor *YHWH*," the artist should change to "Yizkor Elohim."

Questions of Equivalence

SAPPHO TO VALÉRY: POEMS IN TRANSLATION. *By John Frederick Nims. Princeton University Press. $16.50. Paper, $6.95.*

Reviewed by D. S. CARNE-ROSS

Whether or not this, as it is sometimes urged, is a "great age" of poetic translation, there is no doubt that a lot of poetry does get translated. Not always for the best of reasons; we are lazy with foreign tongues. At one extreme is the professor's translation, done with an eye on classroom adoption by someone who is familiar with the language and culture of the original but is not handy at making verses. At the other extreme stands the poet's translation, the free or "creative" version which, I once suggested, tends to mean that the writer does not know the language he is working from and hopes that you don't either. The professor's translation, though it can claim to meet a clear need, is not easy to justify. To offer students third-rate verse and assure them that it represents great poetry is damaging to whatever feeling for language they have, usually little enough. Literate prose versions would serve them better and be far more honest. The "creative" translation is deceptive at a loftier level and more resistant to attack, at least when it is carried out with the panache of Robert Lowell's best work, in which there is little to do except silence one's misgivings and welcome a new English poem.

Mr. Nims's ambitious book, *Sappho to Valéry*, spanning twenty-five centuries and eight languages (with the originals *en face* to show what is going on there), belongs to neither camp. In a well-informed, well-tempered introduction, Nims stakes out a middle ground for himself, theoretically perhaps a little dull but arguably the best position to work from. He claims the poet translator's proper liberty from that literal fidelity which can be the worst betrayal, and warns against translation's ugly and all too faithful sister, "translationese," that leads even decent writers to maul something as effortlessly natural as "Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn?" into "Know you the land where bloom the lemon trees?" (Nims writes: "You know that land, her lemon groves in bloom?" Easy enough? But think of the crimes we commit when we try to translate.) Liberty is not another word for license, though, and Nims is politely critical of colleagues who set up house in someone else's poetry and do their own thing there. He is not one of those who leave everything to genius, and he accepts the need for a lot of hard exegetical work on a poem before he tackles it. How, he wonders, does anyone dare to translate a poem like "Le cimetière marin" without pondering "at least fifteen or twenty of the French studies of the stylistics of Valéry's work"? Unusual, too, these days, is his resolve to reproduce as nearly as possible the metrical form of his originals. Lowell spoke scathingly some years ago of "strict metrical translators" who, he said, "seem to live in a pure world untouched by contemporary poetry." Yes, but we have suffered a good deal at the hands of the alternative, libertarian school. A poem lives inside its form, in a real sense *is* its form. Abandon that (on occasion you have to, of course), and something essential is lost.

Formal equivalence does nonetheless raise problems. Roy Campbell used to turn Lorca's unrhymed eight-syllable *romance* line into rhyming quatrains. This never felt right, even though he was matching a native Spanish

D. S. CARNE-ROSS is University Professor of Classics and Romance Languages at Boston University. His *Instaurations: Essays In and Out of Literature, Pindar to Pound* was published in 1979.

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form with a native English one. Nims hews closer to the original:

> Friend, what I want's to trade
> this horse of mine for your house here,
> this saddle of mine for your mirror,
> this knife of mine for your blanket.

But this doesn't feel quite right either. The repeated spondaic or trochaic endings, self-consciously trying to echo the Spanish feminine endings ("house here" / *casa*, "mirror" / *espejo*), are not altogether natural in English. This would not matter if in the process the range of native metric was being extended by the acclimatization of a foreign form (something Pound achieved here and there is his early versions from Cavalcanti, writing a ten- or eleven-syllable line that moved like the Italian hendecasyllable), but Nims's powers are hardly of that order.

A similar problem turns up when Nims represents Sappho's stanza by English sapphics:

> On your throne, a marvel of art, immortal
> Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, amused to
> lead us on through folly and pain—you'd doom me
> body and soul now?

It is easy enough to do what Nims has done here and reproduce Sappho's pattern (-u-$\overset{u}{-}$ uu-u-$\overset{u}{-}$) by replacing her sequence of quantitatively long and short syllables with stressed and unstressed syllables. This however creates an effect quite unlike that of the Greek and is neither natural nor very attractive in English. Only Swinburne, I think, at his best a great metrist, was able to capture the liquid movement of Sappho's line and at the same time produce convincing English:

> Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
> All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,
> Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
> Fear was upon them,
> While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.

A different problem—it is tiresome, I know, to keep on about problems in this way, so let me inject parenthetically: translating lyric poetry is virtually impossible, and the perfectly successful translation does not exist. The criterion here is not so much success as interest and life, and Nims's work is always lively and often interesting, even when he fails, as I take him to do with the problem of finding a formal

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equivalent for troubadour lyric. A poem of Bernart de Ventadorn begins:

> Can l'erba fresch'e·lh folha par
> e la flors boton' el verjan,
> e·l rossinhols autet e clar
> leva sa votz e mou so chan.

("When the new grass and leaf appears and the flower blossoms on the bough, and the nightingale high and clear lifts its voice and moves its song.") Nims faces Ventadorn's eight-syllable quatrain rhyming *a b a b* with his own eight-syllable *a b a b* quatrain:

> When—presto—turf and trees are green
> and blossoms cocked where they belong,
> and the wild singer tweedles keen
> and chuckles gruff to try the song.

The diction of the Provençal is generic, transparent, almost neutral—leaf, flower, blossom, nightingale. No word or image claims any special attention. Ventadorn gets his effect, so far as I can see, almost entirely through rhythm, from the way the level, predominantly iambic movement of the first three lines modulates in the fourth into /xx/x/x/. With the choriambic *leva sa votz* we suddenly hear the bird's song. Our poetry prefers, almost requires, a more sharply particularized diction; hence Nims comes up with his wild singer tweedling and chuckling gruff. A stanza later we find him writing:

> Persuade the girl, for once, to be my own
> before I'm dates and curlicues in stone.

But Ventadorn offers only the unadorned "Car una vetz tan midons no destrens / abans qu'eu fos del dezirer estens?" ("Why for once did you not compel *midons* [to love me] before I was destroyed by longing?")

I do not want to play the futile where-is-this-in-the-original? game. A verse translator must have his freedoms—to cut and add and adapt. There is a question, all the same, as to exactly what Nims is giving us here. His versions are too free to offer much help to the reader who finds the Provençal difficult. Though they are fresh and agreeable enough to read, they can hardly claim to stand as poems in their own right, nor are they offered as such. And they have been so thoroughly refelt into English poetic terms that little remains to suggest the alien impulse that stirred their originals into being. Yet should not the translator of older poetry take this as part of his task? For he faces (or does not face) something like an archaeology of the emotions. I am thinking of *midons* in the last passage from Ventadorn. It is well known that the troubadour love poet often speaks of the lady as, literally, "my lord" (*midons, meus dominus*). This is scarcely conceivable in any other language and "my lady" is not much more serviceable in contemporary English. But if *midons* simply becomes the poet's girl, the danger is that in attempting to render this distant poetry available, the translator jettisons a good deal of whatever it is that made the attempt worthwhile in the first place. Even though Ventadorn, unlike later troubadours whose devotion is usually more idealized, may have in mind what an English poet called the right true end of love, it is still not safe to assume that his sentiments can be equated with today's sexual free-for-all.

A simpler but no less valuable office the translator can perform, when he is as enterprising a linguist as Nims, is to claim attention for poets writing in languages most of us don't know. The seven translations from the late medieval Catalan poet Ausiàs March are among the most interesting and rewarding in the book. Using a blunter, more colloquial diction than Ventadorn, March comes over more readily into modern English; hence when we find a lady "tearing her tresses, caterwauling woe," she need cause no misgivings since this (I take it) is very much what she is doing in Catalan: "Cabells rompent ab grans hudulaments." A language with words like *hudulament*—from Latin *ululatus* or *ululamen*, I assume—deserves to be better known. (The lady in this remarkable, distantly "Baudelairean" poem is life pleading her case against the superior attractions of death, "Close to [whose] throne the ecstatic countries lie.")

Most accomplished too are the translations from Saint John of the Cross. Here one turns inevitably to those done a generation ago by Roy Campbell, who shared Nims's gift for stanza form and rhyme. The honors seem to me about equal, though Campbell has, I

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think, the finer ear. But let the reader judge. Here first is Nims, then Campbell:

My love: the mountains' height,
forest ravines—their far-away recesses;
torrents' sonorous weight;
isles no explorer guesses;
the affectionate air, all whispers and caresses.

My Love's the mountain range,
The valleys each with solitary grove,
The islands far and strange,
The streams with sounds that change,
The whistling of the lovesick winds that rove.

Nims keeps the rhyme scheme more exactly, but Campbell does better with the beautiful fifth line ("el siluo de los ayres amorosos"), except for his last two words which are translator's *remplissage*.

The most extensive treatment Nims reserves for Goethe, with twenty-two poems. The English-speaking world is periodically reproved for its curious failure to respond to this poet. Why does a lyrical gift that all native German speakers agree in finding unsurpassed so easily in English sound a little . . . trite?

Ein rosenfarbnes Frühlingswetter
Umgab das liebliche Gesicht.

("Your face a glory: May and roses / Its native weather!") Since I have no idea how this question should be answered I will only suggest that perhaps Nims tried too many short lyrics (such as "Mailied" or the delightful "Heidenröslein") where the element of sheer song is so preponderant that there is almost nothing to translate. The longer poems give the translator more to bite on, and Nims shows his mettle with the moving "Marienbader Elegie," the love poem Goethe wrote at the age of seventy-four for a girl still in her teens. "Das Tagebuch," the Olympian's gamy account of a sexual fiasco on the road, is another matter. This is not a poem to do on stilts and Nims is jaunty enough, but surely the tone should be a shade more seigneurial or at least Byronic, the diction not done over so completely into contemporary below-the-salt American? ("Listen, mister, cool it," "The bedroom's cozy as a travel ad," and the like.) One notes that this translation first appeared in the manly pages of *Playboy*.

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I have left to the end the poem that Nims bravely starts with, "Le cimetière marin." Bravely, because this is not only a great poem but a poem whose greatness is today rather well understood and appreciated. It is one of *our* masterpieces and hence valued in a way that, for most people, the work of earlier periods can never quite be. Line after line shows the care and intelligence which have gone into Nims's version, his search for the poem's secret intentions, and the means whereby they are realized. He catches something of Valéry's slow, grave music. And yet, as one reads the translated words, the unavoidable question arises: Is this a great poem that is coming to be in English? An unfair question? Yes, of course, but there, or rather here, it is:

Fine sky, true sky, consider me: I change.
After a fit of pride, a fit of strange
Lazyness—lazy yes, but full of strength—
I yield to this; the brilliant space prevails.

Beau ciel, vrai ciel, regarde-moi qui change!
Après tant d'orgueil, après tant d'étrange
Oisiveté, mais pleine de pouvoir,
Je m'abandonne à ce brillant espace . . .

Revolution in Extremis

SERGEI NECHAEV. *By Philip Pomper. Rutgers University Press. $18.*

Reviewed by ROBERT LEITER

"Only in savage and decadent nations is history made by assassinations," wrote Alexander Herzen when, in 1866, he heard of the young revolutionary Dmitri Karakozov's attempt on the life of the czar. The émigré Herzen was adept at analyzing Russia's governmental weaknesses; and he knew well—had been party to—the foibles and delusions of young revolutionaries. But no one, inside or outside of Russia, was prescient enough to foresee the malignity and barbarism of the next phase of the student rebellion. Karakozov had been a member of Ishutin's group "Hell," which, in its brief history, had come to sanction violence against those party members who endangered the goals of the revolution.

Then came Sergei Nechaev, the subject of Philip Pomper's book, who, in the late 1860s and early 1870s, would willfully take Karakozov's place in the apostolic succession, thereby advancing, in the most abhorrent manner (but always for the good of the people), the cause of political terrorism. Nechaev was not the first to declare that "the end always justifies the means" (in fact, that honor goes to Ishutin), but he was the first to declare it and then act upon it.

Nechaev has been variously described as a Jacobin in the style of Robespierre, a charlatan altogether devoid of moral scruples, a grim fanatic known for his mesmerizing effect upon others. He lived to be only thirty-five, but in his brief life—and for far too long after—he held a fascination for generations of revolutionaries. He is known to us today as the author of "The Catechism of a Revolutionary," a historically important set of conspiratorial guidelines in which both the members of the revolutionary unit and the general populace are deemed expendable. And it was Nechaev who, on the flimsiest of pretexts, murdered a fellow comrade, one Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov, and so gave to Dostoevski the outline for his novel *The Devils*.

Nechaev, who came from peasant stock, early in his youth professed a desire to study. Supported by his father, a surprisingly literate mill worker, Nechaev did well enough in his studies to leave Ivanovo, the town of his birth, and to secure a teacher's qualification in Saint Petersburg. He came under the influence of the student radicals there and began writing the first of his revolutionary proclamations. In the wake of arrests by the czarist police, Nechaev fled to Geneva and was successful in convincing Ogarev and Bakunin, the "aging émigré veterans of the socialist cause," that a great revolutionary fervor was sweeping across Russia. Though Nechaev thought the émigrés "parasites," he used them to his political and economic advantage and, with the possible assistance of Bakunin, wrote "The Catechism." Armed with a document bearing the seal of a spurious organization known as the European Revolutionary Alliance (a fabri-

ROBERT LEITER's work has appeared in the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, *Commonweal*, *Dissent*, and many other journals.

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cation of Bakunin's febrile imagination), Nechaev then returned to Moscow and began recruiting people into his secret society, the People's Revenge. Ivanov was an early convert, but he soon came to question Nechaev's authority. Nechaev, who had called for complete obedience to his will, denounced Ivanov as a police spy and, with the aid of his followers, murdered the young man in a lonely Moscow Park. Nechaev fled to Geneva once more, made contact with Ogarev and Bakunin, and while evading the czarist police started on another proclamation campaign. After three years of feverish activity, Nechaev was extradited and, upon his return to Russia, found guilty of the murder of Ivanov. Placed in the notorious Fortress of Saint Peter and Saint Paul for life, he converted the guards to the revolutionary cause. But the prison diet gave him scurvy, and he died on November 21, 1882, the anniversary of Ivanov's death.

There is, no doubt, a fascination about Nechaev's life, but the question remains: Does his admittedly spectacular but brief career warrant yet another full-scale biography? Mr. Pomper adds little to our understanding of a story told often in the past, and there are moments in his book when the Freudian emphasis distorts important issues. An avowed psycho-historian, Mr. Pomper would like to describe and explain how a young man of simple origins, ostensibly committed to books and higher learning, evolved into the monster who spawned Nechaevism. This is the root of our fascination with Nechaev, but it may be the one element in his life that cannot be analyzed in any systematic way.

Mr. Pomper believes that Nechaev was an extreme example of "the politics of revenge," a young man determined to punish the upper classes, but one who simultaneously suffered guilt for having risen above his station in life and whose devotion to the cause was reparation for being a student and thereby a burden to his family. But there is nothing in Nechaev's life to support this thesis: He wove a martyr mystique about himself—falsifying his background, overplaying his peasant origins—because it enabled him to manipulate the consciences of others. He was a liar who early on saw the incendiary power of his lies.

For Mr. Pomper, Nechaev does not simply represent a random pathology in an otherwise

The Righteous Remnant

THE HOUSE OF DAVID

by Robert S. Fogarty

"An adventist sect that fielded professional baseball teams? A utopian commune advocating celibacy but practicing free love? Such apparent anomalies are part of the bizarre history of the House of David—which originated in the 1600s, had its heyday from 1903-1927 in eastern Michigan, and still continues on with some 50 members. Antioch historian Fogarty, a specialist in communal history, meticulously describes the peculiar succession of prophets . . . sets forth the complex relationships between leaders and followers . . . A neat recounting of the facts."—*The Kirkus Reviews*

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healthy movement, but rather an example of the foul heart at the center of the Russian revolutionary tradition. This seems a blatant misreading of Russian history. Isaiah Berlin's essays attest to the complexity of the intelligentsia's behavior. Russian intellectuals may have been powerless and frustrated, and their isolation from "the people" may have led them into tragic blunders, but they were by no means blindly devoted to authoritarian doctrines. Their attraction to socialism was on the whole tempered with a sense of moral caution.

Absent from Mr. Pomper's book is any extended discussion of Dostoevski or of *The Devils*, and the omission is telling. In *The Devils*, Dostoevski set out to satirize the liberals, to denigrate their halfheartedness and cowardice, their propensity for grand talk that tended to mask their Hamletism. But Dostoevski could not bring himself to condemn completely either the liberals or the radicals, for he knew, as a theist devoted to the enslaved peasantry, that many honorable people had chosen socialism in the hope that their violence—this once—would end all violence.

Dostoevski did admit that, though he could never have been Nechaev, in his youth he might have been a Nechaevist. Mr. Pomper cites this quote but does not explore it. And there is no mention made of Dostoevski's involvement with the Petrashevsky Circle, which led to his arrest as a radical and his subsequent Siberian imprisonment. Nor is there any discussion of Nikolai Speshnev, a member of the Petrashevsky Circle, who held a great fascination for Dostoevski and is said to have been the model, at least in part, for Nikolai Stavrogin in *The Devils*. Speshnev, a wealthy landowner, believed in the revolution, declared himself a Communist, and went so far as to begin a secret society. There is evidence that Dostoevski may have been involved in recruiting new members. During this period he was greatly agitated and, as Joseph Frank, Dostoevski's biographer, has said, "His various utterances faithfully portray the oscillation caused by his uncertainties." At one point, Dostoevski told his wife that had he not been arrested he might have gone mad. Though the language is hyperbolic, it is indicative of Dostoevski's ambivalence about radicalism.

And what of Peter Verkhovensky in *The Devils*, who is considered by many historians to be the most accurate portrait of Nechaev that we have? Peter is the classic buffoon, but with a difference. He is devoid of virtue and ideas—save the desire to destroy. He is an antic liar, always in motion, a dangerous man. But if Nechaev had only been a buffoon, without the force of personality to attract others, then there would have been no reason for Dostoevski to create Nikolai Stavrogin, one of his great sinner-saints, who has, in the novel, even raped a young girl. Stavrogin seems, in contrast to Verkhovensky, to be all enigmatic stillness. But it is Stavrogin who is the catalyst, propelling his fellow revolutionaries over the edge of reason into arson and murder. And it is he who has written something very like "The Catechism."

Neither Verkhovensky nor Stavrogin is a completely satisfying creation, and one cannot be understood without understanding the other. But in combination they constitute a more effective definition of Nechaev and Nechaevism than anything Mr. Pomper gives us. Only in the rendition of Ivanov's murder does Mr. Pomper's Nechaev acquire a touch of danger. The world Mr. Pomper describes, unlike the hothouse atmosphere of *The Devils*, has had all its rough edges smoothed out. The claustrophobia of *The Devils* is integral to Dostoevski's definition of Nechaevism's fatal attraction. But compared with Dostoevski's great novel, Mr. Pomper appears to have written a lyric romance on the theme of political despotism.

City Lights

WALT WHITMAN: A LIFE. *By Justin Kaplan. Simon & Schuster. $15.*

Reviewed by LEON EDEL

Ever since Van Wyck Brooks wrote his anecdotal history of American literature, we have talked of the "flowering" of New En-

LEON EDEL is the author of *Bloomsbury: A House of Lions* and a forthcoming volume of essays on literary psychology, *Stuff of Sleep and Dreams.*

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gland, but I have never heard anyone suggest that there was a distinct literary flowering of New York as well. New England produced the essay and the sermon, the Hawthornesque novel, and Emily Dickinson; New York produced two extraordinary novelists and the greatest of the American poets—the self-appointed bard of Manhattan (and Brooklyn). To be sure, Melville sailed to the Pacific, an escapee from the city, and Henry James fled abroad; but Walt Whitman, the Long Island farm boy, stayed at home and sang all America. More than the New Englanders, these three individuals were the discoverers of new forms and new substance in American fiction and poetry. All three were originals, and the most original was the indolent drifter who lived in Brooklyn and sang Manhattan as part of his celebration of the Self. He became a kind of native Homer who was his own Ulysses. Someday these three will be seen as emanations of the American city at the moment of its early growth and vitality in contrast to the New Englanders who lived with their orchards and woods—Henry James, who sought high civilization in Europe; Melville, who encountered but shrank from the primitive in the Pacific; and the good gray Walt, the most primitive of the three, who left us the enraptured book of his life, *Leaves of Grass*.

Justin Kaplan's biography of Whitman is written with less crowding than his earlier "factualized" life of Mark Twain. It is in reality a work of searching literary criticism, essentially a biography of Walt's poetry-packed book rather than a rounded life of its all-too-human author. Its principal story and drama emerge from the self-dramatizing exclamatory poems, which contain all the mysteries of Whitman and need to be read with close attention to the Aesopian language the poet slyly used to render his forbidden subject, the animal-sexual and particularly homosexual life of man, acceptable to the readers of his time. "There is something in my nature, *furtive* like an old hen," Walt said, and he was a mock-innocent who fondled his sexual metaphors. His finest quality was his acceptance of himself and of human sexuality at a time when bodies were thickly clothed and eyes were fixed on head and shoulders. Walt was not plagued by city-boy guilt and puritanical sin in his feelings about sex. Perhaps his farm-

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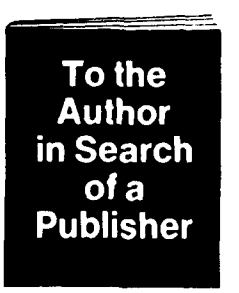

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boy childhood accounted for this: a farm does not make secrets of sex. In his parochial way, Whitman enabled himself to sing of his passions by resourceful indirection, and sometimes marvelously plain speaking, where his fellow homosexuals in Europe, tied in the knots of "the love that dare not speak its name," took refuge in the Greeks with a general sense of frustration and defeat. Forbidden love is hard to proclaim—and yet the poet cannot silence himself.

Melville and James left America in part to escape from family. Walt, again like most good farm boys, clung to his. He grew up in a very masculine world, with five brothers: he came by his monosexual feelings honestly. There were a couple of sisters but, as we know, sisters didn't count in those days. The common denominator of the three imaginative writers from New York was that of all artists: the crisis of sex, which in one form or another is crucial to art. Certainly Walt Whitman dealt with this crisis more successfully than the other two: they went further underground. Whitman faced the great human passion, "the great relation" as James learned to call it in his old age. He brought nineteenth-century poetry out of its romantic sensuality into the more spontaneous realm of the physical—shrinking neither from human smells, nor skin, nor sweat, nor pubic hair, nor the leaves of grass in the armpits. He anticipated Freud in his insistence on the supremacy of the sexual drive:

> This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry, and that all men carry.
> (Know once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men like me, are our lusty lurking masculine poems.)

The penis as poem—that was Walt's finest message. Freud would have to battle the entire medical profession to establish an analogous view of human sexuality both as the poetry of dreams and as a source of human illness. When Walt spoke of "the procreant urge" he spoke not of making babies but of the sex drive. The word *urge* is the operative word:

> Urge and urge and urge,
> Always the procreant urge of the world . . .
> I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked . . .
> Echoes, ripples, and buzzed whispers . . . love-roots, silk thread, crotch and vine . . .
> A few light kisses . . . a few embraces . . . a reaching around of arms . . .
> . . .Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

Kaplan begins his biography with Walt Whitman as an old man in Camden and his elaborate preparations for his posthumous fame and death—a dangerous biographical strategy. A biography, of course, need not be rigidly chronological, but the strategies of narrative need to be planned quite as scrupulously as the strategies of the battlefield. In this instance, describing the gerontological Walt at the beginning deprives the reader of the *cumulative* unfolding of the poet's life and incidentally deprives the biographer of his best ending. Having killed off his hero at the start, Kaplan traces in detail the externals of his life from farm boy to house builder, journalist and *bon vivant*, including Walt's journey and sojourn in Louisiana with his younger brother Jeff. And out of this objective and often burdened narrative, he brings us suddenly into a remarkable expository chapter rightly named, after Rimbaud, "Illuminations."

With a few swift strokes and apposite quotations, Kaplan assembles the sex life in *Leaves of Grass* out of the packed pages of this resounding book, in which so many readers bog down among the incantations and catalogues. This is the central climax of Kaplan's biography and it has deservedly been praised. But we read it with a certain bewilderment, for we are being offered the same mystery Emerson encountered long ago when he welcomed Whitman to the start "of a great career" and added that there must have been "a long foreground somewhere." Nothing in the first half of Kaplan's biography prepares us for the "illuminations." Where and what had been the psychosexual experience that radiates from the lines Kaplan quotes—those long embraces and kisses, the oral sex, the delight in the love-juices, the glorification of the penis (with occasional allusion to women to make the book seem democratically heterosexual, even though its message is exclusively homosexual)? In other words, Kaplan has not been able to relate how Whitman came to be the proclaiming poet of the body. We have all we need to know of the teacher, Quaker, journal-

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ist, the amateur phrenologist, and the books he read, Carlyle and Rousseau, but where in all this were the experiences that enabled Whitman, without guilt or shame, to proclaim to the world his deep and sensuous passion? What led to the self-recognitions that crystallized in *Leaves of Grass*? In what way was the ingenuous yet crafty Walt moved to his greatest act of compassion, his becoming a kind of Florence Nightingale of the Civil War hospitals, the nurse of "my own children or younger brothers"?

I would suggest that this serious flaw in an otherwise skillfully wrought literary biography resides in Kaplan's failure (or unwillingness) to use the inductive method, to indulge in the kind of speculation only a biographer can attempt, for he alone has saturated himself in all the writings of his subject. A biographer must commit himself somewhere to feeling and empathy. Some kind of psychodynamic of Whitman is possible, even when we have no record of actual copulations and actual sexual indulgence. Surely there is enough in the histories of Whitman's attachments to Peter Doyle, the streetcar conductor who had served in the Confederate Army, and others, and in those lists of fugitive male acquaintances, or in his careful changes of male allusions to female in order to throw dust in our eyes, as Proust did by giving many of his boys feminized names.

Late in the book we learn how important the poet's trip to Louisiana had been, that trip chronicled so casually and objectively along with other chronicles of Whitman's active life. Whitman was then twenty-eight. He took with him his fourteen-year-old brother, Jeff. We are told that in later years Whitman sank into a "slough" of depression when Jeff finally married. Was this a "homoerotic fantasy" of "two boys together clinging"? How does Kaplan know it was just a fantasy? "Jeff," said Walt, "was very much with me in his childhood and as a big boy [we were] greatly attached to each other till he got married." The marriage had been a termination; and Kaplan himself adds that the "cherished and exclusive relationship with Jeff had been fractured"—this was in 1859. The word *fractured* explodes on the page with the force of a grenade. It harbors within it an entire history of brotherly relations—perhaps brotherly incest—that seems to lie behind Whitman's homosexual experience. If the word *fractured* can be used, then a modicum of speculation can be permitted as well, all the more since the poem-cluster "Live Oak with Moss" refers back to the Louisiana experience and contains such moving lines (given us by Kaplan) as:

For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under
the same cover in the cool night,
In the stillness, in the autumn moonbeams, his face
was inclined toward me,
And his arms lay lightly around my breast—
And that night I was happy.

Such profound emotion and melancholy seem to me skirted by the biographer who is content to ask us at the end of this passage to read Erik Erikson on the kind of "deep sense of isolation and consequent self-absorption" with which "Whitman must come to terms." This kind of clinical sentence is distinctly chilling. I would argue that it is the biographer's task to put himself into his subject sufficiently to try to experience a crisis of intimacy, the problem of isolation, and the possible ensuing self-absorption. The same timidity toward questions of "literary psychology"—the quest for the dynamic of personality and character—is to be found in Kaplan's handling of Whitman's personal relations. He lets a few Thoreau anecdotes explain the meeting of the author of *Walden* and the author of *Leaves of Grass*, yet misses the drama that such a meeting implies—a meeting between a man who has fully expressed his libidinal feeling with a Thoreau who has thoroughly suppressed such feelings. One is deprived in the same way of a richer encounter between Emerson and Whitman. Only by a searching kind of biographical writing, by creating for us felt scenes and felt passages, can the past be made vivid for us. The anecdotal method of Van Wyck Brooks simply will not do.

This said, we must recognize that Justin Kaplan has given us a much needed portrait of Whitman, his animality and liveliness, his earthy sagacity and not-so-innocent candor. This Walt corresponds, at least, to the poems he wrote, and if the biographer has not sought sufficiently for the "foreground," he has taken us further than most of his predecessors.

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The Reader Replies

George P. Elliott

In his "Memoir: George P. Elliott" (Summer 1981), Robert Brustein displays an imperial way with facts. He states categorically that "there was no obituary [for George Elliott] in the *New York Times*" and finds this "a melancholy commentary on the fickle, fragmented nature of our literary culture." Since there was, in fact, an obituary in the *Times* (May 10, 1980), what are we to do with the "melancholy commentary"? File it away for possible future use? Brustein goes on to find irony in the nonfact that the *Times* chose to "ignore" George just as George chose to "ignore" the *Times*. Since the *Times* regularly reviewed my husband's books and since George read the *Times* with interest (though never with the proper awe), perhaps we should file this particular Brusteinian irony in the "melancholy commentary" folder.

Brustein states that "George lived for over a decade in Syracuse . . . teaching in an academic English department where he served for a time as chairman." Not only did he never serve as chairman, he was not in the purely academic branch of the English department at Syracuse but was attached to the Creative Writing Program (a division of the department), which over the years has been considered one of the best writing programs in the country. His immediate colleagues were writers, not academicians. These included Delmore Schwartz, Philip Booth, Donald Justice, W. D. Snodgrass, Hayden Carruth, Raymond Carver, and a number of other writers who were, from time to time, here to replace staff writers on leave. The coordinator of the program was Donald Dike, not himself a writer but a distinguished teacher of writing, with whom Joyce Carol Oates studied when she was here as an undergraduate.

A point-by-point rebuttal of factual errors is tedious. Let the several bloopers cited stand for the many present in the memoir.

Having blasted off from a launching pad of solid nonfacts, Brustein orbits away into irresponsible speculations masquerading as privileged knowledge: "Midway through his life . . . George made a conscious decision to refuse celebrity . . . a moral determination . . . undertaken both to chasten himself and to rebuke his colleagues. . . . And the obscurity he chose for himself was partly intended as his commentary on a corruptible literary world."

There is a lot more of this kind of thing before a peroration in which Brustein's protagonist assumes all the postures possible in a drama of self-damage. He is (1) "a failed monk" who "flagellated himself" for loving the things of the world; (2) a man who "wanted fame and arranged his life for obscurity"; (3) a man who "wanted recognition and banished himself from the seat of the awards"; and, finally, (4) a man who "wanted to influence his time and ended up isolated in an academic English department."

Brustein has not written a memoir about a real man. Out of his own simplism and theatricality he has written a banal scenario about A Writer Who Tries—and Fails—to Make It in New York. This protagonist, being intensely moral (to the point of priggishness), follows the inexorable laws of stereotypical necessity: he forswears the world, puts on a hair shirt, and turns his face to the wall—a Galahad for purity, a stylite for self-punishment.

Those friends who were at all close to George during the past twenty years would laugh Brustein's scenario out of court. They knew George as gregarious, optimistic, open, enthusiastic. He had a large appetite for the pleasures of the world and indulged it without signs of guilt. He enjoyed teaching, particularly teaching young writers of talent. He loved writing—the *act* of writing, the getting of words on paper—above everything; if rewards came from it (and a number did come) he was pleased, if they didn't he was disappointed but undeterred. He was temperamentally incapable of writing to prescription or of taking critical advice about how to make a story or essay more "acceptable" or more "attractive." He could write only out of his own interest in a subject. Since quite a few of the things that interested him did not interest the general public, he had a smaller audience than he would have liked. But essentially he had no choice as to what and how he wrote; he could write no other way.

This last fact is one that Brustein obviously never perceived. If he had he might have written more interestingly and responsibly about his subject.

Since Brustein is fond of irony, I hope he is

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sensitive to the irony in his having used psychologizing gimmickry on a man who despised all psychologizing, never employed it in his own writing, and saw it as an unforgivable invasion of privacy.

MARY EMMA ELLIOTT
Syracuse, New York

ROBERT BRUSTEIN replies: I apologize for the factual errors that Mary Emma Elliott identifies. I apparently missed the *Times* obituary. I disagree with her statement of my intentions but feel it is unfitting for me to offer to defend my estimate of George to his own widow. I tried to draw an affectionate and respectful portrait of a man I also loved and respected, whom I believed to be a very special kind of hero. I have obviously failed in the minds of some of those who were very close to him. Perhaps I was the wrong person to write this memoir; whatever the case, I regret having written it.

Can Philosophers Be Angry?

I found Sonya Rudikoff's essay on the alleged violence of philosophers (part of her review of *Moore: G. E. Moore and the Cambridge Apostles* by Paul Levy in the Summer 1981 issue) more interesting than accurate. At any rate, Wittgenstein did not threaten Karl Popper with a poker, as she writes, but Friedrich Hayek, as the latter reported in a memoir published by *Encounter* awhile back. Moreover, Wittgenstein did not actually threaten anybody—rather Hayek felt threatened by Wittgenstein's reckless gesturing with a poker. The philosopher in this instance was careless rather than violent. So was your commentator.

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG
New York, New York

SONYA RUDIKOFF replies: Mr. van den Haag was unwise to question my accuracy before making sure of his own. "*Encounter* awhile back" is certainly an unpromising reference. He would have done better with something more precise, with my own sources, for example: *The Life of Bertrand Russell* by Ronald W. Clark (London, 1975) p. 494 and *passim*, and "Intellectual Autobiography" by Karl Popper, in *The Philosophy of Karl Popper* edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp (La Salle, Illinois, 1974) Volume I, pp. 96–98. Both provide adequate context and background for the Wittgenstein incident.

Popper, who had been asked to read a paper to the Moral Sciences Club at Cambridge, found himself interrupted repeatedly by Wittgenstein. Each time he mentioned what he thought were philosophical problems, Wittgenstein dismissed them because, in his view, there were no philosophical problems, only linguistic puzzles. Popper listed a number of problems, among them that of the validity of moral rules. Wittgenstein challenged him to give an example of a moral rule. Popper replied, "Not to threaten visiting lecturers with pokers," thus calling attention to Wittgenstein who was at that moment gesturing with a hot poker. It was then that Wittgenstein, enraged, left the room.

Popper does not claim that he was the only philosopher so threatened. Given Wittgenstein's widely reported quixotic and violent behavior, perhaps many others felt similarly threatened. Indeed, as a matter of fact, Hayek himself does not claim that it was *he*, and not Popper, who was so threatened. Only Mr. van den Haag asserts that foolish claim.

The Nature of Nurture

It seems almost too obvious that Affirmative Action goals are set in relation to what one might realistically expect from a particular population; that is, they are based on a known number of persons from represented races who are available for work or school opportunities. What can one reasonably expect if there are no prejudices to interfere? It seems that in respected (and in some less respected) disciplines we are quick to ask where the data are—or whether they can be quantified. Yet with Affirmative Action goals we seem to be suspicious of anything that can be quantified.

I think Professor Adelson needs to be reminded of his own observation, namely that the issues surrounding success and failure are very complex. Likewise, before there can even be success or failure, there must be opportunities. There must be an equalization of opportunities—based as needed on equalization of training and education—lest we fall victim to social Darwinism. It takes much more than raw genetic material to make modern Homo sapiens evolutionarily successful. Furthermore, from what we know historically of mankind's systematic attempts to annihilate whole cultures, we should look carefully at any argument which suggests that all it takes to succeed as a race is "a little gumption and a lot of hard work to achieve The American Dream."

DONNA BIGLER
Urbana, Illinois

God, Gallup, and the Episcopalians

Cleanth Brooks's jeremiad over recent changes in the Episcopal Church (Summer 1981) is more elo-

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quent than other examples of this genre but no more convincing.

Mr. Brooks is convinced that the Episcopal Church has fallen into the hands of heretics who, not content with encouraging doctrinal laxity, have ordained women to the priesthood and, even worse, have mangled the Book of Common Prayer, reducing that revered volume to a pedestrian collection of antiquarian liturgies and liberal sentiments. In this litany of complaint Mr. Brooks has touched on some serious failings of the Church. But as a picture of what has happened in the Episcopal Church during the past decade, his essay is woefully inadequate.

Why was the Prayer Book radically altered? Mr. Brooks believes that liberals were determined to eliminate the numinous language necessary for speaking about God. In their mischievous work they were aided by liturgical scholars eager to impose the "Protestant dream" of a prayer book based entirely on the liturgies of the early Church. What Mr. Brooks fails to mention is that the old Prayer Book was almost never used as it was written. Rubrics were ignored, prayers were omitted, and rites and ceremonies from other traditions were added, not least by Mr. Brooks's fellow Anglo-Catholics. Mr. Brooks might concede all this, but he argues that the new Book is theologically suspect and linguistically reprehensible. The first accusation is utterly groundless. The new Prayer Book is, in fact, more Catholic than any of its predecessors. For the first time Anglicans have a Prayer Book which provides for private confession, Holy Week services, and the great Easter Vigil. No Prayer Book has made the Eucharist more central to the life of the faithful. The Protestant dream of returning to the worship of the primitive Church—the dream which inspired Cranmer in the first place—has produced a liturgy closer to that of Rome and of Orthodoxy than anything Anglicans possessed earlier.

Had the Church listened to Mr. Gallup, complains Mr. Brooks, the old Prayer Book would have been retained. This is true. It is also true that the Episcopal Church does not determine its liturgy by polls, a fact strangely lost on so staunch a traditionalist as Mr. Brooks. He might ponder the fact that had there been a poll in 1549 there would have been no Prayer Book whatsoever.

To be sure, much of the new Prayer Book is clumsily written. A great opportunity was lost when the revisers insisted on their own uninspired version of contemporary language. But the Daily Office, the Eucharist, and the Burial service are all provided in traditional as well as in modern prose. There is, no doubt, the danger that the traditional language will be banished by liturgical zealots. But this is a possibility to be resisted, not a fait accompli to bemoan.

Finally, having exhausted his spleen against the new Prayer Book, Mr. Brooks complains that the ordination of women has made union with Rome more difficult. Significantly, he offers no other objection to the ordination of women. For someone so concerned with orthodoxy, this is a strange concession to pragmatism. Mr. Brooks also conveniently ignores the fact that the priesting of women is no sudden aberration, but the culmination of more than a half century of debate and theological study. Nor does he mention the Vatican's insistence that the orders of all Anglican clergy, male and female alike, are invalid.

The Episcopal Church has its share of problems. But it is far healthier than Mr. Brooks and other Cassandras imagine.

JOHN RICHARD ORENS
Metropolitan College
Boston University

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation (Act of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code)

1. Title, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR: 2. Date of Filing, October 14, 1981; 3. Frequency, Quarterly—March, June, October, December; 4. Office of Publication, 1811 Q Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20009.

6. Names and Addresses of Publisher, Editor: Publisher, The United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; Editor, Joseph Epstein, 703 Hinman Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60202.

7. Owner: The United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; No Stockholders.

8. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None.

10. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months.

11. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. of Copies *Single Issue* Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run)	32,648	32,494
B. Paid Circulation		
1. Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales	605	617 to date
2. Mail Subscriptions	23,884	23,621 to date
C. Total Paid Circulation	24,489	24,238
D. Free Distribution By Mail, Carrier or Other Means Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies	1,244	1,244
E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D)	25,733	25,482
F. Copies Not Distributed		
1. Office Use, Left-over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing	6,820	7,012
2. Returns From News Agent	95	None to date
G. Total (Sum of E&F—should equal net press run shown in A)	32,648	32,494

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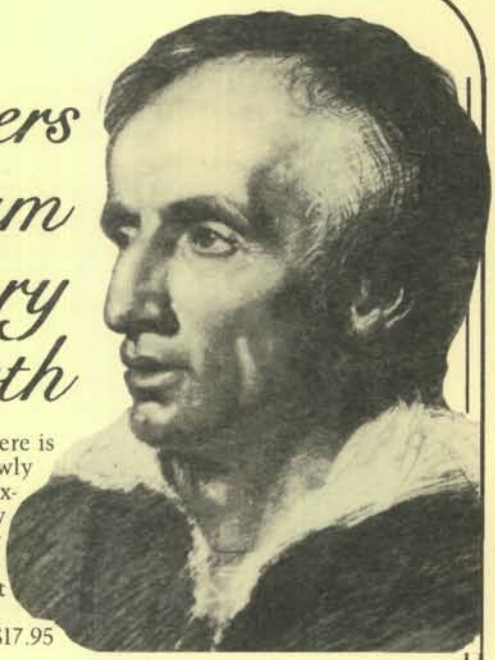

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